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MY HOLOCAUST
1939-1945
BY EDWARD LANDAU.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WRITTEN IN THE
FOLLOWING PAGES ARE FROM THE CONCENTRATION
CAMPS WHICH I MIRACULOUSLY SURVIVED.
I DEDICATE IT TO THE MEMORY OF ALL MY LOST
LOVED ONES, NAMELY: MY MOTHER ROSE, MY
FATHER HENRY, YOUNGER BROTHER ADAM,
SISTER-IN-LAW CHARLOTTE AND HER SON MARK,
DEAR GIRLFRIEND JENNY, AUNTS, UNCLES, COUSINS,
FRIENDS AND COUNTLESS MILLIONS OF OTHERS WHO
SUFFERED AND PAID THE SUPREME PRICE WITH THEIR
LIVES AS VICTIMS OF THE CRUELITIES AND GENOCIDE
COMMITTED BY HITLER'S GERMANY FROM SEPTEMBER 1939,
TO APRIL 1945.

EDWARD LANDAU.

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EDWARD LANDAU.

Krakow, Poland, my home city, in the summer of 1939. I was looking forward to the end of my military tour of duty which was supposed to end in November. Although the political situation in Europe and Poland was very tense, and everybody realized that we were on the brink of war with Hitler's Germany, we hoped that by some miracle it would be avoided. But, on September 1st, 5 o'clock in the morning, we heard the roar of airplanes followed by explosions. I ran out from the barracks and saw low flying black airplanes with white crosses and swastikas on them bombarding the military airfield which was only a mile away. I stood for a moment reflecting on the situation. We were at war, and this war was not only against Poland, but even more, against us Jews. What I did not realize was that I was witnessing the beginning of an historical Holocaust which would cost the lives of many millions of human beings, particularly the Jewish people. I was to be the only survivor in our family and a witness of human mistreatment, cruelty, barbarism, and wholesale genocide. This is a chapter in my life which I would like to forget rather than go through its agonies and pains. We hear many times the slogan, "never again", but I am not sure that it can not happen again.

I returned to the barracks where over the radio it was announced that we were at war with Germany. The Germans were bombing simultaneously all principal cities and attacking along the entire Polish-German border. I received orders to report in full battle gear and with my dispatch motorcycle to Division Headquarters. The following days were very hectic and confusing. I was receiving and delivering messages to different units in the field. On the third day France and England declared war on Germany. We thought that their planes would soon be attacking the enemy, but it was evident that their declaration of war was

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only symbolic. They were less prepared for war than we were. Krakow was declared an open city and as such was spared any future destruction. All military personnel were ordered to move out. My unit was ordered to head to Warsaw, the Polish capital. Warsaw was under orders to defend itself even to total destruction, if necessary. Our unit was supposed to harass the German flanks and bring relief to the defenders. Before I left the city I drove hastily home to say good-bye to my parents and younger brother. That was an experience in itself, seeing the agony in their eyes when their sons are going to war. I say sons, because my parents had just received a letter from my older brother living in the southern part of Poland, that he was to report to his army unit in Warsaw. I left my parents not knowing whether I would see them again.

Since my motorcycle had a sidecar, another army corporal was assigned to me. Together we were responsible for providing communication between different army units moving toward the capital. During the days we were constantly strafed by German fighter planes. We spent many sleepless nights trying to insure communications between scattered units. Driving through bombed and burned out villages and towns we finally reached the vicinity of the capital only to learn that it was already encircled by the Germans and we could not be of much help. Our new orders were to drive southeast to the Rumanian border. There we were supposed to lay down our arms and our Military Mission was supposed to reorganize us in order to build a new fighting force. The Germans and Russians signed a pact two weeks before the war giving Russia the eastern part of Poland. This gave the Germans a free hand in the western part of Poland. My partner and I were proceeding toward the Rumanian border. Since the Russians were advancing from the east, we found ourselves on September 25th surrounded by a Russian armoured column. I stopped my motorcycle and waited to see what would happen. There were numerous trucks and cars with army personnel in this area all heading for Rumania. There were our senior officers trying to persuade the

Russians to let us continue to Rumania. We only heard "niet", the Russian word for NO. They requested that we lay down our arms, then they would let us go home. We did not have much choice. A Russian lieutenant asked me to join them. I looked at his shabby appearance and was not encouraged. He gave us the propaganda speech of how they came to liberate us and how abundant everything was in Russia. We told him that we were farmers and had to return home to dig the potatoes before the cold weather settled in. Then he got mad. He looked at my jacket with the two stripes on the shoulder and asked whether I was a major. I had to explain that two twisted silver bars and a star was the rank of major. I was a corporal. He did believe me, but kept looking at me, wondering aloud how come as a corporal I was so well dressed in leather pants and jacket, and he, a lieutenant our liberator, almost in rags. He decided to take advantage of the situation. He told me to take off the leather pants, coat and gloves, took the motorcycle keys, grabbed the rest of the loot and happy like a kid, told us to go home and dig potatoes and he ran away.

We started our journey home on foot. The trains were not operating. We did not want to meet either the Germans or Russians again. The first opportunity we had we exchanged our military clothes with a farmer for civilian clothes in order not to be obvious and get ourselves into a prison-of-war camp. We were walking during the day purposely using side and field roads. We would sleep in farmhouses. The farmers were good to us not knowing that I was a Jew. The story would be different if they did know. We reached the lights of Krakow by the end of October after 4 weeks of walking. I said good-bye to John, my army companion for the last 2 months, and headed through the city to home. German patrols and soldiers were all over. They did not bother me regardless of my beggar appearance and 4 weeks unshaved beard. There were many men returning home in the same condition as myself, and they did not bother with us. I stopped to see my aunt first, since she lived a few blocks before my own house.

She opened the door and did not recognize me. She was reaching for some bread thinking I was a hungry soldier. But she recognized my voice and we had a happy reunion. I found out that my parents were okay so I ran home. You can imagine the happiness of my parents! At first they did not recognize me either. Then out came the outburst of affection. My mother was drawn and sick looking from worrying about my brother and myself. This is probably why I did not join the Russians. I knew that every day with us away was agony for her. I also felt that I would be needed in the coming troubled days.

The fighting was now over. Warsaw was almost completely destroyed in its defense against the Germans. There were many many casualties. We received word that my older brother never made it to the capital. He was back in his home town which was now part of the Russian territory. We were thankful that our family had not suffered any casualties.

Krakow was declared as the capital of the conquered Polish territories. The King's Palace on the Wawel, dating back to the 12th century, was the residence of the SS Governor of General Gubernia as they had named Poland. Poland did not exist as a country anymore. There were large posters all over the city showing the destruction of other Polish cities from the German bombing. The English, French, and international Jews were blamed for it, since Poland had tried to resist the German invasion.

Before the war Krakow was the historical, cultural center, and leader in commerce, of southwest Poland. It was a city of 300,000 population having over 65,000 Jews. Most of the businesses and light industry were in Jewish hands in Krakow and in Poland as a whole. King Kazimir the Great in the 13th century invited the Jews of western Europe to come and live in Poland to promote commerce. He guaranteed the Jews full rights and freedom. In that time it was beyond the dignity of the Polish nobility to engage in commerce. This was the reason for his invitation.

The anti Semitic feelings among the Polish gentile

population were deep inborn for centuries. These feelings were suppressed by the constitution which proclaimed equality. These constitutional equalities varied depending upon the leadership in Poland. Under Hitler these meager barriers were removed and the old anti Semitic feelings blossomed in full force. One of the first steps under German rule was to assign to all Jewish businesses a German or half blooded German administrator. They had full power to throw out the Jewish owner if they so desired. For my family the immediate problem was in obtaining food for everyday consumption. We were getting up at 3 o'clock in the morning in order to be in line at the bakery to receive a loaf of bread. Here was the irony. We were not harrassed by the Germans, but by the Polish people. When we would reach the front of the line and be recognized by the Polish gentiles as Jews, they started to talk about how rich the Jews were. We did not need to stay in line. We were taking bread away from the poor people. By pushing and cursing they managed most of the time to get the Jews out of the line. If this did not work, they would stop the passing German patrols and point out the Jews. Most of the time the Germans kicked the Jews out with their boots to the amusement of the rest. Sometimes the Germans did not want to have any part in it. They would look with disgust at the instigators and wonder how they could do this to their own neighbors. My brother was kicked out of the bread line and recognized as a Jew because he wore glasses. I survived the ordeal and was the only one able to join the bread lines.

The Germans, in order to be able to apply sufficient pressure on the Jewish population, formed a so-called Juden Rat. This was a governing body of Jews who, together with the Jewish police, carried out all the dirty jobs the Germans wanted done. In the fall of 1939 the Jews did not receive any food or coal allotments for the coming winter.

We started our forced unpaid labor by reporting twice a week to the Jewish Center where former Polish street sweepers, now supervisors, were picking up groups of Jews and leading them to

different locations in the city for cleaning the streets and parks. Some of the supervisors were nice and tried to be helpful. The others were abusive and clearly enjoyed the role of being master over the slaves. In the beginning months everybody tried to make the most of the situation, since were all sure the Germans would lose the war eventually and all the abuses would be forgotten.

But we did not realize in what direction and to what extent the German Nazis were working, particularly against the Jews. They fully exploited the Polish conditions, deep anti Semitic feelings of the majority of the Polish population. They made the Polish people believe that they were better than the Jews and they (the Germans) were only after the Jews. The majority of Poles believed and took full advantage of the new position the Germans created for them, while the Jews payed with their pride, money and blood. The forced labor created peculiar situations: the rich paid the poor to go to work and get kicked and abused by the Polish supervisors, but the poor did not have a choice. My younger brother was grabbed with some other young men from the working group by the SS men and assembled in one of the schools to form the manpower for one of the first labor camps. Luckily he knew the school building and managed to escape with a few of the other young men.

Before the war my father and I had an electrical contracting business. Now my younger brother joined us. For the time being as tradesmen we could go around without some restriction. The Germans knew that the Jews were businessmen or highly intellectual people and only a few laborers. This class they decided to break first. It became fashionable to be dressed in working clothes and many Jews tried to learn some trade in a hurry. In this respect we were in a little bit better position as we were doing some work for a Polish builder who now was doing jobs for the Germans. We got some papers that our skills were important for their commitments to the Germans. This relieved us from the forced labor. We learned to trade our skills for the

necessities of daily life. We were living in a predominantly Christian section of the city, which was advantageous so as not to be bothered by the Germans, but we had to watch out for our neighbors, some of whom were worse than the SS men.

I had my first encounter with the SS men when I was home with my mother. We heard the loud voices and knock at the door ordering us to open it right away. I opened the door and there was a young man in an SS uniform. He ran inside, saw the radio, turned to me and yelled that we were not supposed to have a radio. Then he slapped me in the face! In that moment I almost lost control of myself. I forgot that I was a Jew. My mother stepped between us. It was a shock to my system, but I calmed down and I saw the fear in the face of a young SS man. I saw that he was not quite a seasoned SS man, not yet an SOB. He turned around and left the apartment without a word. I want to say that that man did not come on his own. He was sent by somebody from the neighborhood.

Winter 1939-1940 went by uneventfully. Everybody tried to do the best they could to survive.

On the warfront everything was at a standstill. That was bad for us Jews because our future was in a defeat of Germany. We were sure they would be defeated. The only question was when, and whether we would be able to outlast the oppressor. We welcomed the spring and the renewed war activities. Unfortunately the Allies did not do well. In April 1940 Germany attacked and invaded Denmark and Norway. On May 10, 1940 they opened the assault on the Netherlands and Belgium, and France on June 22, 1940. France capitulated and the British, after heavy casualties, evacuated their troops through Dunkirk back to England.

With the defeat of France and England our future looked very dark. The Germans were jubilant. No wonder - they had 3/4 of Europe. In summer 1940 they gave the Jewish administration orders to get the Jews out of the city. As Krakow was the seat of the occupational government, they did not want to see any

Jews. The Judenrat or Jewish committee tried to persuade the people to leave voluntarily because otherwise the Germans would stage the forced mass deportation to an unknown destination. Under those circumstances everybody had to start to find a way for himself to get out. As my mothers family resided in Krakow for generations, they could not help each other. My father originally came from the town of Rzeszow, 200 miles away. His brother was living there and my father shared the property with his brother there. It was logical for us to relocated to that town. We contacted the relatives by mail to find out whether we could find some accomodation on our property. We were told that our property was under German administration and our aunt was sharing her apartment with some other displaced family. But, we were welcome to share the rest of the space with her in the crowded apartment. It was very generous of our aunt and ucle, so we decided to move to the town of Rzeszow.

With this move started the destruction of everything we had. My parents had to sell the furniture and everything else that they worked for all their lives. We could take with us only our personal belongings, like clothing and bedding, but everything else had to be sold or just left behind. One had to see the Polish farmers with their horses and wagons swamping the city and buying out everything for pennies to the joy of our Christian neighbors. With our bundles we again became the wandering Jews. I am critical of the Polish people and their behavior in those critical times. It does not mean that there were not fine Polish people and individuals who risked their own lives to help the Jews, but unfortunately, they were only a few to make the difference in the overall picture. So, we were on the way to Rzeszow. My mother and her family who were residing in Krakow for centuries had to leave. I have to go back to describe my mothers family. There was Grandmother Hanna who had 4 daughters and two sons, my mother Rose, sister Franceska, Stefania and Lola, brothers Herman and Leopold. All sisters lived in Krakow, both brothers lived in Wiena and were Austrian Citizens. Sister Franceska and her husband Leopold Hillman had one son Zygmunt. They decided to stay in Krakow, then they were in the Ghetto from where they were deported to the unknown destination.

Zigmunt was only one to survive the cocentration camp and after the war came to U.S.A. Sister Stefania and her husband Stanislaw Schmaus had two children, daughter Helena and son Leopold. Uncle Stanislaw was the administrator of a military hospital. When the war started they were moved east to City of Lwow and later to the Soviet-Union to Siberia where they survived the war. After the war they came back to Krakow and later moved to Israel. Sister Lola and her husband Ignac Kestenbaum had two daughters Sofia and Helena, and a son Simon, they moved to uncle Ignac home town of Rabka which was resort town about 40 miles from Krakow, they all perished. Uncle Leopold Schmaus

and his wife Ida with their two daughters Lucy and Eli and son Robert managed to emigrate to England where they all survived. Uncle Herman Schmaus and his wife Julia with two sons Alfred and Walter tried desperatly to leave Austria. Son Alfred managed to join uncle Leopold in England, Julia and son Walter by miracle emigrated to the U.S.A. Uncle Herman was attached to Polish emigration quota even though he was an Austrian citizen. He never received Visa to join his wife and son in the U.S.A. Anfortunately he shared the fate of all others somewhere in an obscure concentration camp.

Our family was; mother Rose, father Henry Landau, and 3 sons, Igo, Edward (I), and Adam. My brother Igo survived in the Soviet Union where he was on tour with an orchestra, but his wife and a child son perished. We had our last tearful gathering and goodbye not knowing whether we would see each other again when we moved from Krakow. My father grew up in Rzeszow as the son of a well known and well to do merchat family. He never liked the small town and its atmosphere, so as a 13 year old boy he left home and went first to Vienna and then to Berlin where he educated himself and learned the electrical trade. He worked for the biggest German electrical enterprise. He spent 17 years in Germany and then came back to Krakow and married my mother. He started his own electrical contracting business and after I grew up I joined him and were very successful contractors. When the Germans occupied Krakow, we as Jews were not allowed the inspection of our work and were forced out of business and out of the city. We were back to his small town which he left so many years ago. Rzeszow was a town of 40.000 which was swollen with many Jewish families who were forced to leave their home towns and cities like we had to leave Krakow. We moved into my aunts apartment where we were 3 families in 3 rooms, sharing one

kitchen. We had no furniture and had to sleep on the floor. We learned to live with the situation we were in. We learned to be hungry and cold. Unfortunately it was much harder on old people like my mother than on the young like us. My mother's health began to fail since there was no medication for Jews. I got a job with a Polish electrical contractor who was supplying skilled manpower for the engineering firm doing jobs for the Germans. As Jews, we had to buy everything on the black market. My pay was enough for 2 loaves of bread, but being employed by the Germans, I received the certificate from the Gestapo that I was an electrician working for them, and for the time being it was respected and I was not bothered by Polish or German patrols when I went out. I showed them my pass and they did not check me any more.

In that time all the Jews had to wear a white armband with the Star of David as an identification of being a Jew. At the same time the section of the town where the Jews were living was declared as the Ghetto. It was closed. To be able to go out one had to have a special permit, and identification papers besides. Individuals like myself, with a permit, were able to go out alone, but the others were going out in groups escorted by the SS guards to perform different kinds of work as slave labor. For a Jew to get caught outside the ghetto without the Star of David armband was quite risky. The punishment could be loss of permit to work outside the ghetto, severe beating or even getting shot, depending by whom one was caught.

Because I had the certificate from the Gestapo which, by some miracle, did not say I was a Jew, I took off the armband when I went outside to work. I benefitted from working without the armband because I was working as a Pole doing some electrical wiring in a big army complex. I was able to go to the army kitchen and get some leftovers. By doing some jobs for soldiers I received some bread sometimes, or canned food which I smuggled home for the family. I smuggled some coal every day which I stole from the recreation rooms. It was necessary to take

chances to sustain our lives. The winters from 1939 on were very severe, so the few pieces of coal were very important; maybe even more important than the piece of bread. And that was the winter of 1940-1941.

My boss at the engineering firm was a very nice Polish human being. He himself was displaced from the northern Polish territory which the Germans declared as a part of Germany, and all the Poles who did not want to declare themselves as Germans had to move out. He did move south and opened his business in Rzeszow. It was a big difference though, to be a displaced Pole or displaced Jew. He and his family were very fine people. He always tried to get me jobs that I would benefit from in some ways. That is how it came about that he sent me to work in the army main hospital. He said, "Go there, they have a lot of everything, food in particular. You will be all right there".

So, I started to work for the hospital administrator, Captain Keefer. I had to keep the time and the material expenses and had to get them approved by the administrator. I got to know him. He was one of the nicest human beings of the German Wermacht. He always approved the payment for the company promptly and took an interest in my work and praised my performance. While working in the hospital I was able to bring more food home for my family. As my father was over 60 years old, he was not able to get any job. The older people were completely passed over as an unnecessary balast.

We did not know what the future would bring, but I knew that it would be much better if my father, as a topnotch tradesman, could get a job. So, I spoke to the hospital administrator, Captain Keefer. I told him my father's story, how he grew up in Germany, learned the trade and spoke fluent German, that he would be a great benefit for the hospital, as he was an expert on X-Ray machines. As I could not do all the jobs, by employing my father he could have an electrician on duty all the time. He liked the idea, but I told him that he would have to bypass the German and Jewish employment office because they had orders not to employ

people over 60. He was furious. "Those stupid heads", he said. "I need a man like your father and I will get him". I was very happy because I knew that he would try his best.

When I started to work in the hospital, Captain Keefer knew I was a Jew. He told me not to wear the armband because I might run across some fanatical soldier who might get abusive. So, I did not wear the band. As far as my father was concerned, I was told that Captain Keefer, all dressed in his uniform with all the decorations, drove in his Mercedes to the ghetto where the German and Jewish employment office was. With a loud "Heil Hitler" he demanded that my father should be directly brought in and sent to the hospital, that his services were essential for the well being of his poor wounded soldiers. So, Captain Keefer did it. They sent directly for my father, he received all the necessary papers, and started to work the next day. I thanked Captain Keefer the next day. He told me he was glad to do it and said that with those dummies you had to put on all your medals, stretch your hand in "Heil Hitler" and holler loud. Then they respect you and you get everything you ask for.

In the coming weeks my father took the responsibility for the electrical work in the hospital. Captain Keefer liked my father and the two of them quite often had friendly discussions. We did not realize at that time how dangerous it was to befriend a German captain. In the eyes of the Gestapo it was viewed as a Jew trying to corrupt a German officer. But, in the meantime my father was working and for a time being we were better off.

Spring 1941, on April 13th the Germans opened the Balkan offensive and by May 1st the campaign was over, after which they attacked the island of Crete and at the end of May Crete was German. So, our situation was completely hopeless, but we did not give up hope. Our hope now was in the USA and Soviet Union.

In the meantime everything was working against us. Although my younger brother was working for the same contractor with which I started, and in some respect we were better off than many other people, the conditions were dragging us all down

physically and morally. We did not realize how the Nazi machine was working against us without stopping. They displaced people from big cities and villages to small towns. By the time they were through with them people were a bunch of broken down human beings who lost all their material possessions, their spirit and health. But that was exactly what the Nazis were trying to accomplish. In this process they established the labor camps, separated the young from the old, wives from husbands and children.

We received a letter from my older brother who was living in the part of Poland occupied by the Soviet Union. They just had a baby boy. Under normal conditions it would have been a very happy occasion for all of us, but it only added more worries for our future.

My Aunt Stefania, whose husband was a Polish Army career officer and was disarmed by the Russians, was living with family in the city of Lwow. Their situation was not too rosy either. The Russians were deporting all ex-Polish army personnel to Siberia and it was only a matter of time before they also would go.

My brother was a first violin player in Lwow Symphony Orchestra, so he let us know that he was going with the orchestra for a concert tour to Russia for 3 months. As an orchestra member he had no choice. And that is how he survived by being cut off from Sambor where his wife and infant son were left behind when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union.

After the war end I learned about his whereabouts. Unfortunately his wife Lotta and baby Mark perished somewhere in one of the extermination camps. Being trapped in the Soviet Union he did not know about the grim fate of his family. He joined the Polish Army which was formed in Soviet Union under the command of a Polish General Anders. This Polish Army managed to get out of the Soviet Union and joined the English forces in Persia, and fought on the English side against the Germans through the North African Campaign, liberation of Italy, and bloody take over of the famous Monte Casino fortress.

After the end of the war the Polish Army was sent to England where it was demobilized. As a survivor he too had to swallow the grim truth about his family, that it did not exist anymore and no power can bring them back. Nobody can understand the agony, only the one who went through it. In 1948 he realized that life must go on, he remarried and emigrated to Melbourne Australia, to give the shattered life a new start.

Coming back to Rzeszow new developments started to take place. On the job we were hurriedly preparing and wiring the field hospitals and many other supporting facilities. The Germans were putting in place anti-aircraft artillery around the city and machine guns on the rooftops.

Our house faced the main street of the ghetto. We were able to witness the German troops movement to the east toward the Russian border which was only 100 km away. Day and night the troops were moving. We realized that the Nazis were preparing the attack on Russia. We did not care much for the Russians, but we knew that they were the lesser of two evils. In expanding the war to Russia our hopes of the possibility of German defeat and the end of the war were high. It gave us some hope of survival. At that time I was assigned to another job which was the wiring of the new Wermacht Officers club. I did the main wiring with another electrician. In the same building a large group of Jewish men were doing all kinds of hard work. Then they brought a group of 30 Jewish young girls to do the scrubbing and cleaning. I knew one of the girls in the group from seeing her in the ghetto. She was different from the other girls and I wanted very much to get to know her. I knew from my aunt that her father, before the war, was a very respected man in town. He was active in political and town affairs. When the Germans came, they rounded up all the city elders including the girl's father from whom nobody heard again.

I did not want to approach her directly as she and the group were watched and guarded while they were doing some specific jobs. While walking by and saying 'hello', I knew that the desire to talk was mutual. I had my chance 2 days later, as I was finishing my electrical job. I had to install several light fixtures which were disassembled and required a complete assembling. One of the assembly difficulties was to put and connect the lamp sockets deep into the cavities. My hand was too big for the job and that gave me an idea. I noticed that the young lady whose name was Jenny had a very narrow hand and long fingers. I told the German engineer about my problem with the fixtures and suggested that the girl in the Jewish group had a very narrow hand and she would be able to help me. He checked and agreed that it was impossible for a man to mount the sockets. He called on the guards and advised them to assign Jenny every day to my job, so I became her supervisor.

As Jenny came the next day to help me, we were as two people who knew each other for a long time. Even in those black days without the future we were too young to be able or willing to suppress our mutual feelings. Jenny did the job with ease. The beautiful narrow hand with long fingers, she was as beautiful as her hands. The two weeks we spent together were shining rays of light in a deep darkness. We realized that it was not the time to start a romance, but we knew without saying that we would do our utmost to try to survive the times we were living in, and if we ever would meet again, we would surely mean much more to each other. We did tell each other our life history. She was employed before the war as a secretary in the Rzeszow town hall. Her mother, younger sister, brother, and sister-in-law were all living in the ghetto, grieving about the father from whom they

did not hear anything since he was taken away.

So, the job was finished and we said a very sad, tearful goodbye. Shortly after Jenny was sent out from Rzeszow to an unknown labor camp. I did not hear from her, but I deeply believed that one day I would hear from her. The preparations for the attack on Russia were in full swing and it was very obvious, because even the Poles who hated the Jews tried to be nice, whispering that it was only a matter of time that the Russians would be here. Not that they liked the Russians, but because they were afraid of them, knowing the amount of collaboration they did with Germans. So, our hopes and spirits were quite high again.

The day finally came. June 22, 1941 Nazis attacked Russia. For a couple of days it was quiet. We were watching the skies for the Russian planes attacking the German positions, but there were no planes, no counterattacks. We were completely bewildered. We felt like stabbed in the chest and nailed to the wall. We did not want to believe that our last hopes were completely vanished. But it was the reality. The Germans smashed through the border in another "blitzkrieg", defeated and demoralized the Russian army, and took entire divisions as prisoners of war. They moved forward so swiftly that they did not believe themselves and were jubilant with their success. After 3 days of fighting they moved out all the antiaircraft guns. They were not needed, there was no danger of any attack from the Russians.

For us Jews the attack on the Russians marked the beginning of an entire new chapter. Our experience until now was just "mickey-mouse" compared to what was coming. The Germans were making tremendous advances to the east. Complete Ukrainian armies were surrendering to the Germans in hopes that they would be able to fight on the German side against Stalin and eventually to create an independent Ukraina. It was evident now that the pact between Russia and Germany was keeping Nazis a little bit back in their advances against the Jews, but now by removing the barriers the beast started to move with its full fury.

The Gestapo, which means the Secret State Police, in Rzeszow under the command of SS Sturmbandfuhrer Mak was one of the worst in every respect. Whomever was called there for work or for any questioning was almost surely a goner. Many people never came back from the Gestapo. There was no way to find out what happened to them. That Gestapo took over the responsibility of the well-being of the Jewish ghetto. It now started with the order from the Gestapo to deliver all the fur coats which were needed to keep the German soldiers warm in order survive the Russian winters. Next came the order to collect all the gold, silver and other valuables. Non compliance would be punishable by death. So, we gave up the furs, large silver pieces, gold and diamonds. My father, brother and I were still working outside the ghetto. The forced labor groups working under supervision of the SS were beaten and abused daily.

It was one Sunday in November, 1941, a snowing, cold, gray day. Suddenly several truckloads of SS troopers arrived in the

ghetto, and took positions with machine guns in their hands. We did not know what it was all about. As I mentioned before, our windows faced the main street. We had the best front view seats in the whole situation. We saw pretty sun^{NE} the Jewish ghetto police were running in every direction, running into the houses and getting the people out. Pretty soon one was in our house, hollering loud to get out. I asked what it was all about. He said not to ask stupid questions. Everybody out! Anybody left in the house will be shot by the SS man. The police said to put on warm clothes, the warmest we had. So, we did and got out of the house. We were driven to the synagogue, which was half full already with the people from the ghetto. We went in and they kept pushing more and more people, old, young, children, like sardines in the can. We managed to get the women on the top of the benches and the children we carried on our shoulders, protecting them from suffocation. We were all inside, that means my father, mother, brother, aunt, uncle and others from the house. I don't know how many we were there, but even in this subfreezing weather we were choking and dripping wet from breathing and sweating, being dressed warm.

The rest of the people were massed outside in the cold weather. I don't know who was worse, we inside or the people outside. The people on the outside had to take the brunt of the SS men's brutality: kicking, beating, whipping. With the cry of the children and the fainting of the old, mixed with the prayers of all the people I saw the prelude to Hell. We still did not know what it was all about, whether they were going to poison us or to blow up the synagogue, but after a few hours it did not really matter any more. By 4:00 o'clock we heard a loud shouting, crying and laughter. We could not make out what was going on until the Jewish police started to holler for all the men to go out. So, we started to go out. We got to the hallway and saw the game. There were two lines of about 50 SS men from each side with whips and sticks in their hands. Each of us had to run through the lines of the SS men while they were beating the hell out of us. Laughing and enjoying the play, they would kick one who fell until he could not get up any more. Then they would push him on the side.

The Jewish police clearly were trying to save the older people getting them to the side and feeding us younger guys through the SS men's line. When my turn and my brother's came, I went first, pulled the coat collar up and the hat down over my ears and told my brother to do the same. I told him to stay as close as possible behind me, to run as fast as possible, thus to avoid as many blows as possible. We went through. How many blows my brother and I received I don't know, but they did not sweep us off our feet and that was the most important thing. Luckily we were dressed very warm, in heavy clothes, and that is why we were not hurt. At the end of this grim line they formed us in columns and we went through the city and then behind the city. We still did not know why and where we were going. Finally we stopped in an open field. There were some picks and shovels. We had to pick one and were told to dig the trenches. From the shouting and cursing of the SS men we began to

understand the vision of this ordeal. They said that this would teach us, the dirty Jews, to be ready to work for them joyfully whenever they wanted us. Apparently we did not work with enough dedication for them. I understood we were digging aimlessly till 11:00 o'clock at night. Then they apparently got cold too, so they decided to take us back to the ghetto. We came home cold, tired and hungry. Everybody was glad to see us and we were very happy to see everybody. We learned that the Jewish police saved the old, women and children from the beating. The SS men let them go after the groups of young men went to work. That was indeed an awful, grim experience.

Besides the grim experience it had a grave consequence for my brother. While running through the SS men's line, my brother twisted his ankle. From the swelling and later working in the cold, he got very sick. I think it was pneumonia. He never recovered from the sickness which was very critical for his future. My mother's health was greatly undermined by the past experience. Her heart was weak and the doctor whom we got for her after a great effort told my father that he could not help her because there was no medication for Jews. I saw my father worrying for the first time in my life. We were realizing the helplessness of the situation.

As the time was passing, the condition in the ghetto was deteriorating and, as the winter was progressing and the German army encountered its first difficulty in the war effort from the merciless Russian winter, the hatred and atrocities against the Jews were multiplying. One night a few SS men came into one house in the ghetto and killed several people with the excuse that they were Communists. So, everybody would barricade their doors as well as they could for protection against the unauthorized callers and killers. One early morning at the time when people were going to work, a tenant from the first floor came running breathless telling that two SS men were walking on the street with an ax and had already killed two men. I asked if he locked the house gate. He was so scared that I was sure he did not. So, I jumped the down the stairway as fast as I could, slammed the gate and barricaded it with a heavy plank, just in time. I was standing behind the gate when two SS men started to bang on the gate and holler to open it. I did not answer and luckily the gate was quite strong, so they decided to look somewhere else, where they could kill with less effort.

That was the condition that we had to live from day to day. My brother was sick, could not walk and go to work. His ankle was swollen and infected. We got him to the doctor, a general practitioner who did not know what it was and did not have any medication for it anyway. I was still working for the engineering firm and my father at the hospital. But, the winter of 1941-42 was very hard mentally, morally and physically. We were looking with some hope toward the spring. At least the cold would not bother us as much. My father was bringing German newspapers from the hospital and between the lines we could read that the Germans under Rommel had some difficulty in Africa. They were stressing the severe difficulties the army was facing on the Russian front putting the blame on the biggest enemy, the

Russian winter. But maybe all those things were small cracks in the German structure; they were of no help to us at all.

The Spring of 1942 was around the corner and, as the Russian campaign was getting more difficult, their brutality against the Jews was getting worse. I could describe a thousand and one cases of brutality committed in the ghetto against the Jews. They were indeed gross, but we had no idea what was in store for us in the future.

May 1, 1942..it was a beautiful morning. I was getting ready for work and so were many other men on the street of the ghetto. I heard some commotion outside on the street. I looked out the window and pulled my head quickly back and pulled the curtain. I could not believe what I saw. On the cross road was parked a big Mercedes with swastika flag and on the street the chief of the Gestapo, Sturmbandfurer Mak, and his driver with drawn pistols in their hands were shooting people as the puppets at the gallery. They did not ask any question. I could hear the Gestapo chief shouting to the driver in German to catch this one and shoot him as he was busy shooting someone else. I saw several people lying on the street dead, having just been shot. I was standing with my father speechless behind the curtain. People realized what was going on and started to hide. The two killers pulled out their cigarettes, lit them, slipped in the car and left. As we later learned, those two killed 36 people that morning. Then the Gestapo chief called the ghetto administration and informed them that 36 Communist sympathizers were dead in the street and they should clean and bury them in a mass grave. That was no longer the atrocity of the individuals, that was an open execution by the chief of the Gestapo in this region. Those dead men were called the Communist sympathizers. We all were Russian, American, English, French and even the devil's sympathizers, anybody who was fighting the Nazis. But what was our future was a question for which we did not have any answer.

After this grim style of execution there were circulating all kinds of rumors. One was that Rzeszow ghetto would be liquidated and all the people would be sent somewhere to an unknown destination. Germans started to bring more people from other towns into the ghetto. They were liquidating whole Jewish communities. We heard of grim stories of separation of families and sending part of the people to the unknown destination.

At the end of May it was evident that something radical would happen to the ghetto and its people. There were large masses of SS men, special commandos, in the city, who were the experts in relocating the Jews. Then came the official order. All the Jews will be relocated except the ones who will get the permit from the Gestapo; they will be able to stay. As this was the case, I decided that whatever would happen, we would stay together as a family. I did not think that my brother, who by this time was on crutches because of the ankle that did not heal, my father, my mother, uncle and aunt would get the permits to stay. I was right. When it came to the distribution of the permits, the Jewish police came with only one permit for me. I did not want to accept it. I told him I wanted to go with my family and he could give the permit to somebody else. He said I

was crazy, people would give everything for the permit. Nevertheless I told him to go to hell together with the paper and the Germans. But, an hour later he came back and told me that I had to take the permit and sign for it and from now on he and the Jewish police were responsible with their lives to the Gestapo that the people who got the permits would stay and would be available when the Gestapo would need them. So I had to take the permit and stay back. That changed the whole situation. I realized that we no longer were masters of our lives and our destinies. I talked it over with my family and, as there was no other way, maybe it would be even better for me to stay behind and when I would learn where they were, I would be able to help them. We did not know how naive we were.

As my father's permit to work at the hospital was taken away, I decided to get in touch with the hospital administrator, Captain Keefer, to beg him to do something for my father. At that time I was closely watched on the job. I was working outside the ghetto and the city was swarming with SS men. I knew it was my last chance to get my father out. I sneaked out from the job, took off my armband and ran like crazy through the back streets to the hospital. I finally made it straight to Captain Keefer's office. I begged the secretary to let me in and she did. Captain Keefer greeted me warmly. He told me that he knew the whole situation. He openly cursed the SS and the Gestapo and told me not to worry. He would get my father out, he would go to the chief of the Gestapo and would get the permit for my father. I knew that only the chief of the Gestapo could give the permit. I could not forget that not quite a month ago this Gestapo chief and his driver had killed 36 men and now my father's fate would be in this man's hands. I did not doubt in Captain Keefer's sincerity, but in my heart I had fear. As I was in Captain Keefer's office, he called his driver to have the car ready. He put on his uniform, told me to wait outside the office, that he would be back as soon as possible. He saluted me and left, being very optimistic about his mission. The waiting time was an agony filled with doubts and fear. Then suddenly the door opened, Captain Keefer was back. I jumped up from the chair, but was motioned to sit down by Captain Keefer. He was a different man now. His face was white or ash gray, filled with anger and fear. He passed me without a word, went in his office closing the door behind. So, my fears were justified. After a while his secretary, a fine young woman, came out with tears in her eyes telling me that the captain saw the Gestapo chief Mak, that he humiliated the captain telling him that, if he likes the Jews so much, he could join them together on the Jewish transport, and if he would say one more word about his Jew, the Gestapo would see to it that Captain Keefer would be on the Russian front. So, he could not do anything for my father.

I told her that I was very sorry for putting the captain in such a dangerous situation, thanked her and asked her to thank the captain for everything he had done for us. I left two noble people who were also Germans. Going back I did not run anymore. I was dragging through the town back to my workplace and by some luck was not stopped by the SS men who were all over the city.

Coming back to the ghetto I shared the sad news with the family, as we could not do anything to prevent their departure. My mother and my aunt gave me all their silver and other valuables which they were hiding to keep and maybe use later to help them when I found where they would be staying.

Such an uncertain and helpless situation was sometimes unbearable. It is hard to describe the feelings when you know that you will part with people dearest to your heart. Parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and friends - with a deep fear and suspicion I was asking myself, 'where are they going? will they survive the ordeal?, the old, the sick; and will I ever see them again?' That was an agonizing question and we did not have an answer because we were not the masters of our destinies. We were slaves and the Nazis our masters.

All of us with the permits had to move to one side of the ghetto and the ones without permits had to stay in the same place. I had to take my things, the valuables in my tool sack and had to find a safe place to hide it. Keeping in mind that by selling the things I would be able to help my family I found a place to stay with some other people with permits. I hid all my possessions because to get caught was risking my life. In the meantime we were completely separated from our dear ones. Because our house was facing the street, which was also the dividing line between the two groups, I was fortunate to be able to see through the window my parents, my brother, aunt and uncle. The hours were agonizing for all of us on this side of the line. We were feeling as though our bodies were tearing apart from cries of many and helplessness of all of us as we were staring aimlessly trying to get maybe the last glance at the dear faces.

I would have to be a much better writer to describe the feelings, the emotions and agony of all of us. But the SS men denied us even this last look at our dear ones. They turned toward us with the machine guns in their hands ordering us to disperse. Then the Jewish police took over the job of pushing us in the houses before somebody would get killed. The same day many young men like myself with permits were approached by the Jewish police telling that the Rabbi who committed suicide, left blank, signed marriage licenses. By filling them out we could save some single girls so they could stay with us as wives. The policeman who approached me had the name of the girl who was supposed to be my wife. I happened to know her and naturally did not hesitate for a moment. We went to the building where people from the Juden-Rat were filling out the marriage licenses so I signed my name and became married without a bride. The Jewish police took my Gestapo permit and my marriage license in order to produce them to the SS men and ask the permission to get the wife to the husband who had the Gestapo permit to stay because initially the orders were that wives could stay with husbands who had the permits.

So that evening police delivered to me my wife. I was glad to be able to help somebody and in this agony someone could cry on my shoulder and I had to forget my problems trying to comfort my just arrived wife. Next day we were ordered to assemble on the open space between the buildings. The Gestapo were checking

the papers of some people, then taking them away to the other side to the transport people; then bringing some from the other side to us and all this exchange to the cries and pleading of the people being torn apart. The hollering, kicking and whipping by the SS men were ringing in our ears. Late in the afternoon we were ordered back in the houses. We did not know why, but the Jewish police hastily pushed us in any house just to clear the street. I was looking again through the window, my wife next to me exhausted, sitting on the floor. I saw the SS men all over the street. Suddenly they started to move somebody and then we heard a burst of machine gun fire and then it was quiet again. Suddenly a young woman appeared on the street. I could hear people hollering to her to get in, but she was like in a trance walking toward the Gestapo men. She was a German Jew and in a fluent German she approached the SS men saying that she was looking for her husband who had the permit to stay here. The SS man kicked her saying, "You dirty Jew".

She was really beautiful ,maybe 22 year old. I will never forget her face,after she fell he cocked his gun,she begged him,opened her jacket showing that she was pregnant, that made him more mad, he hollered again "You dirty Jew, you know that jews have no future and you should have no children".He fired the pistol,she lay there covered with her beautiful black hair,her body still convulsing, he fired two more shots into her and walked away. I felt like in a big mass grave. Everybody was so overwhelmed by the magnitude of the brutality of the episode,it left us speechless,everybody searching in his mind for the answer. I am sure nobody slept that night. I found later that shooting before the killing of the girl was in the connection with chasing of a guy who was without a permit on this side. He got killed by the SS man and I learned that he was the uncle of my wife Lena,I did not tell her ,trying to spare the agony.Next day we were again on the assembly place,this time Gestapo supposed to check our papers again, we were sitting in the dirt on the market place like the cattle.The Gestapo came,they put up two tables,their guns with open holsters on the front of their bellies and the whips in their hands. We knew that we are for some kind of treatment and this will be the day to remember. At the table set the chief of the Gestapo Sturmbanfuhrer Mak,the same man who did the killing on May 1 of 36 Jews as they were going to work.I did not forget this face and now I was wondering whether he will remember the name of my father which was mentioned to him by captain Keefer when he tried to get the permit for him. If he did remember,I knew I was due for some treatment or even my life.As they were proceeding with the checking of the papers only few people went through without being kicked or hit with the whip. As all on our side were young people some single,some with wives,few were allowed to stay together, some were separated and the more they cried and begged the more beating they received.I saw how the Gestapo were tearing the papers and separating the young couples. I knew something was wrong but I did not want to worry Lena. Finally it came our turn,we approached the table,I handed the papers to the Gestapo man who looked at them with a cynical smile,he called on the Gestapo chief Mak,I knew we were in a deep trouble. The Gestapo chief took my paper and lashed out at me,

"You dirty Jew pig, You are lying, she is not your wife, those papers are fake". He was furious, and tore up the marriage license. I wanted to say something in our defense but he hit me on the head with the handle of the whip. I blacked out for a moment. I could not see, I only heard Lena crying out "my husband" and the Gestapo chief ordering "take him away", somebody was taking me away. I was sure they were my last minutes of my life. I was experiencing what probably every human being would before the last fatal bullet would hit. But to my surprise the man who was taking me away was a Jewish policeman. I started to regain my vision and asked about Lena, he told me she was taken away to the other side. So the effort to save another life failed. I learned later that the Gestapo found out somehow about the marriage licenses and all those new brides were sent back to the people who were planned to be sent to the unknown destination. After paper checking was over and the Gestapo moved out I ran to the newly erected barbed wire fence which divided us from the transport people. I tried to look at the windows of our house, maybe someone of my family will be at the window. I saw my brother looking out the window, it was too far to say anything, but I saw his pale face, I waved my hand and so did he. I did not realize that it would be my last time that I would see him. The next day we were sent out to work under the heavy guard. I was still working for the engineering firm, I could not concentrate on the work. I had feeling that something terrible is going to happen, that our prayers and hopes of change in our situation will be unanswered. By lunch time some Polish workers told us that under heavy SS soldiers guard the people were moved to the freight station, loaded in the cattle cars with hollering, kicking, beating and shooting while marching them to the station. By late afternoon the train was gone destination unknown. When we were brought back to the Ghetto we all ran to the dividing fence hoping to see somebody, but the place was empty, the buildings and squares were littered with the abandoned belongings, it looked like a big graveyard. Everybody was bewildered, we lost everybody dear to us, I felt like a shell without anything inside. I felt guilty that I am still here alive, when my whole family is gone, even if it was against my will to be here.

We did not know that we were the subjects in the process of elimination, and sooner or later we all will be on the way to the unknown. In the meantime we were glued to the barbed wire fence staring aimlessly until the guards outside the fence started to hit us with the boots of the machine guns through the fence ordering us to disperse or they will start shooting. So we moved away, walking aimlessly without purpose, everybody wrapped in his own grim thoughts. We felt like a pack of dogs without home or family, without belonging to anybody and not having a place of our own. We did not see any purpose of living, but that exactly what our captors wanted us to feel, to be a bunch of animals. Almost entire Jewish administration and the Jewish police were sent together with the transport. Rzeszow was proclaimed free of Jews. We the remaining were the members of the SS working camp. Our permits to work outside the camp were taken away, we were caged in under the penalty of death for trying to get out. We did not have where to go anyway, surrounded by the SS men and the Polish police. There were some good Polish people, but they were too scared themselves and did not have any means to help us, majority though were quite hostile toward us Jews. As much as we were disliked there was an opportunity for the Poles to make money on us. By coming to the fence in places where we bribed the Polish guard we were able to exchange any kind of personal belongings, whatever one managed to hide like clothing, shoes, socks, shirts, towels, fabrics, gold, silver, diamonds, leather and so on, everything went for a loaf of bread and a piece of horse bologna. That was time when the SS working camp did not receive any provision at all, it was apparent that our masters decided to work us and to starve us to death. At this working camp we were divided into groups, cleaning commandos, their task was to collect the possessions left by the people from the Ghetto. Finally in our camp there was established a tailor shop, carpenter shop, electrical shop, linen washing facility. All of us who were left in this camp were mostly young 50% skilled and semiskilled in certain trades. Unskilled ones were going out with SS men or Polish guards to the abandoned Jewish Ghetto collecting everything what was left and bringing it to the storage houses, from which we the skilled ones were bringing to the shops to clean, sort and repair.

All cleaned and repaired clothing, linen, furniture, lamps, electric irons and other appliances were sent out and distributed to the Germans living in Poland or to the SS families. Those were the duties assigned to us after the liquidation of the Ghetto. We all were so bewildered and hurt that we massively turned to the home brewed cheap alcohol made by the poles and handed to us through the barbed wire when the SS men were not looking, we paid with anything we could get from the abandoned Ghetto. We were drinking ourselves to the oblivion and for sure the Germans did not get too much work from us. Knowing our psychological condition they had two choices, either to shoot us or to ignore for time being. They apparently decided to ignore because they needed us to clean up the Ghetto and to make themselves wealthy from the stuff that was left behind by the deported Jews. The Germans did the right thing by leaving us alone for the time being, because in a short time we realized that we who were left here were supposed to be strong and should be able to send some help to our loved ones as soon as we would find where they were. So the drinking stopped, we were doing the best training to survive, which was not easy considering that we were not getting any supplies. We had to steal from the storehouses whatever we could like shirts, pants, shoes, lamps, electric bulbs or switches and hand them over through the barbed wire to the poles for bread or polish kilbasa. In the camp from time to time there was a request from the SS or Gestapo for skilled workers for the SS barracks or Gestapo. Not everybody was coming back from those assignments. The Rzeszow Gestapo with the chief SS Sturmbanfuhrer Mak was one of the worst. He was the one who killed the 36 people just for fun, and also the one who hit me with the handle of the whip on the forehead during the Ghetto liquidation. There were so many paradoxes how one survived and the other perished, for me until the liquidation of the Ghetto was my work for the Electrical Engineering Co. The owner engineer Pinski supplied me with the paper from the Gestapo that I was a skillful electrician was needed to fulfill his electrical obligation for the Wehrmacht without mentioning that I was a Jew. I got the papers loaded with signatures, stamps and red swastika, so I was considered a Pole, speaking pretty good German maybe they were taking me for a "folksdeutscher".

(German origin), because wherever I went to work on military installation showing the guards my pass they almost saluted me. That was the funny part. As we were formed in a working groups I was in a group of 36 men who called themselves electricians. Some of them maybe could put a switch in the wall, but our objective was not how much someone knew or could do but to help each other to survive, what we did. By that time we were may-be 500 men in this working force. We were living in one 5 story apartment building, about 6 to the room. Considering that was closed labor camp it was bearable but it was constantly on our minds why we dont hear anything from our loved ones, it was beginning to be a mystery but we did not dare to lose the hope. In the mean-time we in the electrical shop were getting all kind of junk to repair and restore. As no one of us was really interested in doing any usefull work we were forced every week to deliver specified amount of repaired merchandise. The SS men started to come in to inspect what we were doing, so we had to be on guard all the time. We all were living in the big apartment house and were escorted every morning by SS man across the field to the old Ghetto where our electrical shop was and the storage houses of everything that deporties left behind. We were all young between 20 and 40 year old in those groups, wearing our own clothes most of the time the best we had and the warmest one, because one never knew when he or she will be grabbed and sent somewher else. People tried to put some coveralls over the good cloths it should not be so obvious. From my experience when I was working outside the Ghetto and they knew I was a Jew I learned that although they hated the Jews, when it came to deal with one they respected professionalism and displayed almost military respect for them, therefore when I had to work for them I always tried to be distant, but very respectful and professional. My miracle Gestapo paper was taken away from me at the time of Ghetto liquidation. When I was working outside the Ghetto wiring SS garage I got to know some Belgian mechanics who were working as volunteers for the Germans, I had a chance to buy a beautiful working coveralls. I must to describe it; it was light gabardine in a beautiful blue color with zipper from the bottom to the top and zippers on all the pockets. I have to say that my blue coveralls made me a known personality in the camp.

I did not have a name but the "electrician in the blue coveralls". Weeks were passing by and not a word from our beloved ones. I had nightmares, waking up at night bewildered and sweating. Most of us turned again to alcohol but it did not help much. Then one day Sunday we had a day of doing our laundry and cleaning the apartment house where we slept. Suddenly a ray of hope and sunshine came especially for me, there was a commotion outside the building, I looked out the window and saw two truck loads of young women were unloading. I could not believe my eyes there was Jenny jumping of the truck with some bundles. I was overwhelmed with the emotions, I jumped 3 steps at the time from the 2nd. floor down hollering Jenny, Jenny, she heard me, and saw me and we fell in each other arms, embracing and kissing like old lovers which we were not, but we had tears of joy in our eyes to see each other again. As in time when I first met Jenny we had a spark lit in each other and some hope that maybe we will meet again in the future, when we said a tearful good by. After that every day traumatic experiences took over and I almost forgot Jenny untill her coming back now, an outburst of mutual feelings threw us in each other arms. Jenny was assigned to the first floor room where she was reunited with her brother and sister-in-law, that was the joyous part for her. But her mother and younger sister were deported the same time as my parents, when the Ghetto was liquidated. So to the late hours of the night we were consoling each other, grieving and crying on each other shoulder. Next morning was the same 6 o'clock gathering on the assembly place in the old Ghetto for the inspection by the Lager Fuhrer and the assignment of the newcomers for work. In this part of the old Ghetto was our electrical shop on the second floor of the building and in other buildings was a carpenter and mechanics shops, sorting warehouse and many other, laundry building where manual washing was performed in large wash tubs on a wash boards. The new arrivals women were sent to the laundry building. It was very important shop for the Germans, the other workers were bringing mountains of linens and white bedding which had to be washed, boiled, ironed, and sent to the German warehouses for use by the pure Arians. Jenny was assigned to the laundry with many other women, it was hard manual labor, each sheet had to be scrubbed on the wash board.

As I knew almost everybody in the camp I could try to put her on someother job, but after talking to Jenny she made a lot of sense that nobody was secure in any place in the camp. In that time the SS started to bring some new people from other places and taking some out and sending away. The laundry was important for the Germans and relatively safe, second the job was wet and sweaty but knowing that we were appoaching the winter and because it was only warm place it made good sense to stay where she was. So she kept the job, since it was only place in camp where she would be able to wash in hot water all our cloths; her brother and sister-in-law and my, on top take the every day bath in hot water after hard work, and for sure she was 100% right. To keep yourself and cloths clean was outmost important, so Jenny was sweating it out in the laundry but happy and always fresh as a lily. In that time our SS Lagerfuhrer was Ober Sharfffuhrer, who was coming every morning for inspection horse back riding cutting the air with his whip, making a lot of noise, hollering about the Jews but I never saw him hit anybody, what was very unusual for the German. Some times to keep their own position they had to prove how tough they were with the Jews. Pretty soon I myself had an encounter with him. As I was saying we were not interested in doing work for the Germans we only did enough to survive, so we designed a watch and alarm system; somebody always was watching the outside, and when the Lagerfuhrer or SS inspector were approaching the watchman pressed the buzzer button alerting us that someone is coming. For this occasion we had a special set up. We were doing things which were making a lot of noise, flying sparks, pretending to be very busy doing important work. One morning suddenly the alarm went off we were told by the guy who was keeping the watch that the Lagerfuhrer is heading toward our building, we right the way put in motion all our noise makers and sure enough the Lagerfuhrer appeared at the door, we all jumped to attantion, the Lagerfuhrer told us militarily at ease and asked to stop the noise, then in a loud voice asked where is the electrician in a blue coveralls. I dont remember what went through my head, but must have been a lot. I stepped forward from my working bench, he recognized my blue coveralls and approached my bench saing "thats you", he pulled something out of his pocket, I thought it was a gun,

but it were the electric hair clippers, he put them down on my bench saying "they dont work", I was told that you will be able to fix them,I said that I will be glad to do it for Herr Lagerfuhrer. I wanted to plug it in but he said that he tried it and it does not work, I asked if I can take it appart, (one had to be careful, you had to have permission to do anything). I openned the clippers, the main slide which moved the cutters was plastic and broken in 5 pieces. I looked at it then at Lagerfuhrer thinking that this is the end and he will tell me to throw it out,but to my surprise he said "I was told you will fix it and you better do it or I will shoot you". The Germans had a nice way of saing "Ich lage dich um".I must have turn white,because the men who were looking turned gray. I turned to the Lagerfuhrer and I knew if I said I will do it I better do,because if I could not that would mean the end for me,because it would mean that I lied to the Lagerfuhrer.So I said "Sir as you see it is almost impossible to repair those clippers,but if you give me some time I will try to do my best",he looked at me and said "you better, I will check on you tomorrow", he turned around and left the room. Now all the men were behind me looking at the brocken part with bewilderment,asking what could I do.I did not know but my mind was working fast,next morning the Lagerfuhrer will come to see me and I better have some answer. As the news travels fast in the camp one thing was on my mind to try to cover up the incident and not to worry Jenny, I did not tell her anything.Those were the times when our lives could end in one second. First I went to the warehouse to see if I can find an other pair of clippers,that would be the best solution.At the warehouse I approached Jack who was in charge,I gave him hell for sending the Lagerfuhrer to me with the clippers.He told me his story that two days before the Lagerfuhrer inspecting the warehouse picked up the clippers and today he came back that clippers dont work,but he was told that the electrician in the blue coverall will fix them,so he wanted to know where can he find me,so it was not Jacks fault. I have never found who sent him to me,that I was such genius, what could have cost me my life. I feverishly put upside-down the warehouse looking for an other pair of clippers,could not find any. So back to my bench with the men behind me looking at the brocken part.

I asked the men whether anybody has any idea,nobody knew what to do. I knew that only I had to come with the answer. I was sitting at the bench looking at the plastic parts thinking if I had plastic glue, if it existed may be I could put it together,but there was no such a thing and of sure we did not have any. I tried to pull all the resources of my mind to find the solution and it done on me that I could make the part from the hard wood.I called out "I got it!" and everybody was again around me.I had in my mind a plan: I always was pretty good with carving and I knew I can carve the slide from the wood. The guys were skeptical looking at each other,but by now I was sure I can do it. I got some pieces of steel and ground them into carving tools, in the carpenter shop I cut out a piece of hard wood from a leg of a bed and got everything ready for the next day carving job.I was mentally exhausted but I did not tell Jenny anything. Next day the morning inspection as usually, the Lagerfuhrer went past me without saying anything. Jenny got word of it,she had only chance to ask what happened while walking by,because during the morning inspection we were separated.Later on I sneaked into the laundry building to see Jenny, I assured her that I did find the solution and will be allright. I got a big hug and a kiss from Jenny to the applaud of all the women. Jenny said "I know you will make it", in a low voice I thanked her for the confidence. I left,I had a job to do. I was working very carefully making sure that the dimentions should be the same, not having any measuring instruments it was only my good eye and luck. In the afternoon the alarm went off,the Lagerfuhrer was coming. Everybody was busy, when he walked in everybody jumped to their feet, he told to continue and came straight to me.I showed him and told him that I am trying to carve out the part from the wood. He looked at the part then at me and said: "I knew you can do it". I managed to say " thank you". That day I received the vote of confidence twice,once from my lovely girlfriend,and the second from the Lagerfuhrer.That was quitean accomplishment for one day and the word of it spread quickly through the camp. I was almost half way done with the slide whenit split on me making it worthless,but I did not get discouraged,I realized I had to find hard wood with a very fine grain. I ran again to the carpenter shop with a saw in my hand.

There was plenty of furniture from the Ghetto. I was cutting the legs from the beds checking the grain until I found the birch wood, I took it to the shop and started to work on it to shape and carve again. The next day the Lagerfuhrer was again checking on me. This time I showed him the slide which broke on me and the new one I was shaping. He said "Very good, take your time," and left. By now, I knew I was out of the woods, but had to rush to finish and make it work. The next day, the slide was finished. I had to make sure that dimensions are the same as the old one. To make the slide move freely and slippery, I put it in a hot oil, then dried it out. The crucial test was to put it together and plug it in. All the men in the room were around me keeping their fingers crossed. I plugged in! and the clippers were humming beautifully to the joy of everybody. The Lagerfuhrer did not bother me for two days, so I had to contact the Jewish elders to contact the Lagerfuhrer to tell him that the clippers were repaired. The next day, he came himself. I handed him the clippers and asked him to start the switch. He did. His eyes were shining like a little kid getting a new toy, when he said again, "I knew you could do it!" with a faint, "Thank you." You seldom heard this from a SS man to a Jew. As I said before, the professionalism of the group as electricians was very questionable, except for a few guys, I found myself to be the best one. It was my belief that the best way to survive was to keep a low profile, because it was not good to be friendly with the SS man, or to be liked by one. Gestapo kept a watchful eye,

for situation like this, usually eliminating the Jew charging that he is corrupting a German man. I never wanted to be indispensable but somehow I always became one. The Lagerfuhrer always was sending for the electrician in the blue coveralls, telling me what he wanted and asking me to send one of my man, putting me in charge, which I did not like but did not have any way out, because when the Lagerfuhrer told you to do something you did not say I am not in charge, you just had to do it, so I became the man in charge. The Jewish administration and Jewish camp police found it convenient to refer all the jobs to me. I have to explain the camp management: It was under supervision of Rzeszow Gestapo, then we were guarded outside the barbwire by the SS.men and Polish Police, inside the camp was the office of the Lagerfuhrer, and his SS. guard, then Jewish Lager administration, plus Jewish Police. As long as everybody was referring the electrical problems to me, so went my theory of low profile.

The men in the shop did like it too, they did not have any responsibility and did not have to face the SS.men what was not always pleasant. At that time I received the letter from my sister-in-law Lotta from town of Sambor. There was no mail service for us, I Did not know how the letter got to the Jewish administration. It was a very tearfull, traumatic and pessimistic letter. She informed me that Sambor Ghetto is being liquidated, that she, her 1 year old baby Mark and the whole family are being transported to the unknown destination. As was already October and nobody got any word from our loved ones, after the Rzeszow Ghetto liquidation my heart senk with dark thoughts. My older brother was somewhere in Russia. As Sambor was Russian territory before the Germans attacked, and my brother being a violinist with the Lwow Symphony Orchestra was sent on a concert tour with the orchestra to Russia. Because of the German attack he was cut off from his family. The last deeply moving lines of my sister-in-law letter were to tell my brother if I ever see him that "if on a chilly October night he will hear the wind whistling then he should know that it is hers and babys spirit around."

I read the letter to Jenny and we cried together. Needless to say that I never heard from her again.

As the Germans were bringing more Jews from other towns, and our big apartment house could not accomodate any more people, we had to move out. We were relocated to the old part of the Ghetto where our Shops and warehouses were. This time the women were separated from us, they were put in different blocks from ours. We were not allowed to get together, we were told if we work hard enough, then on Sundays afternoon we will be able to get together. That was quite a blow, but we were used already to everything.

As our numbers were swelling again and we did not get any provision, we all shared what ever we had, but otherwise every one was on his own trying to survive. We were risking our lives while running to the fences to sell something to the Poles mostly the valuables for a loaf of bread. Jennys Brother was working on the cleanup of the old Ghetto, he was able to get in touch with the Poles, he was slowly desposing of everything his family had. By that time I got rid of the valuables I had, and Jenny wanted to share with me everything they had, but I was glad that they were able to manage and would not agree to put an additional burden on their meager resourses.

I managed somehow and was even able to help them out. As we were not permitted to fraternize, the streets in the camp were empty. The only commotion was before 7 o clock in the morning when it was Lagerfuhrer inspection, and 7 o clock at night when the days work was ended. Then we received a new Lagerfuhrer, the old one left with the hair clippers. The new one, I do remember his name, Obersharfuhrer Shubke. He was a man in his 40ties, not mean looking, so we had a hope. On the first morning inspection he approached me and stopped, thought flashed throught my mind " what is now"? He looked at me and said, "So thats you, the electrician in the blue coveralls." I stood at attention, said " Yes sir", HE Told me to come to his office after the inspection. So after everybody went to their work places I reported to the SS.guard in the Lagerfuhrers office buildings, saying that the Lagerfuhrer wants to see me. He let me in and I was facing SS. Shubke. I was staying at attention, he told mi "at ease". Then he told me "I heard about you", nothing bad I hope, Herr Lagerfuhrer" I replied, "NO" he said and began to tell me, that he wanted to put the buzzers between the office rooms. I looked over what was involved, took mental account, and told him

that as soon as I will gether all the material I will bring two electricians to do the job, he said it was O.K and I left the building. So when I got to the shop everybody was around me, again what was it ? I had to tell them all the details. Even the Jewish Policeman was send from the Jewish administration to find out. Because it was established procedure that the Lagerfuhrer would call the "Judenrat"- Jewish Administration, then they would send the Jewish policeman to get the electrician, carpenter or what ever he requested. I was only one that they were bypassed. We did the job to a full satisfaction of Herr Lagerfuhrer. Two days later I was called again to the Lagerfuhrer, he told me he has an apartment in the city and he would need two table lamps, if I could find something for him. I said that my men just repaired some and I would be glad to bring them to his apartment, and make sure they work properly. He said it was in town and He will send the Polish policeman as an ascort for me. In the warehouse I chose two lamps, got my tool box, let know the "Judenrat" where I was going and with the Polish policeman went to the city. It was so nice to see the city again, and people leading almost normal lives when we were slaves. We found the apartment in the new section of the city, rang the bell and a middle age german lady openned the door, she told us that her husband called her and she was expecting us. I showed Mrs. Shubke the lamps, she liked them very much, directed me to the tables in the living room where I connected the lamps. Had to make up some extention cords and lit them up. The Lagerfuhrer came in and they both were pleased. Mrs. Shubke wanted to make some tea, but the Polish policeman and I thanked her and declined, making an excuse that it was getting late and we had to be back in the camp, which was on the other side of the world, the bottom of human misery. Here thouse people were so different, they really did not know what was going on ? It puzzled me. As I was saying nobody was permitted on the camp streets, anybody found on the street better have a good answer when stopped by the SS. men or Jewish police, who was responsible to the Gestapo. As I was called to the Lagerfuhrer quite frequently I was known fixture around the camp, the SS. men or the Jewish police did not stop me, my test lamp and tool pouch was my pass. I always had ready explanation; checking the wiring in the building.

That gave me the excess to the laundry shop where Jenny was working and as our mutual feelings were growing, the desire to be close to her was overwhelming, but the thought of a young pregnant woman who was shot by the SS.man who told her that the Jews were not supposed to have children, that Jews don't have any future, and this did bring me to reality. But should we deny ourselves the dream and hope that something will change. So we played optimists, laughed together from time to time when we managed to have something to eat. One time I gave Jenny my swiss wrist watch as a token of my love for her, and she gave me her necklace with a talisman as a good luck charm with a kiss of love. When I am writing about those happenings today I realize how blind we were. It was winter 1943, we still did not hear anything from our families who were sent out with the transport. Some rumors were circulating that they were sent to a camp in Eastern Poland, by the name " Maydanek "; this news was not too happy because it was also rumor that it was an extermination camp. Which we did not want to believe. This winter as all the winters since 1939 was very severe, and we all were starving and freezing, yet doing our best to survive, The winter went by without major calamity as far as we were concerned, the weak and the sick died from the lack of medication, from the hunger and cold, which in that time was not called calamity. As the spring approached, the activity in the camp came alive again. The working commandos were building like animal corals, we were joking that maybe Germans are going to establish a Zoo, what was a joke on us, we all were a big human Zoo. Pretty soon we found what was all this about. The SS.men started to bring more Jews, and selecting from the camp people for the transport to the unknown. Those who were separated from us were put in the corals, then marched out, to the cries of the one who were left behind, separated wives, husbands, boyfriends. Who can understand the pain and the agony of those who lost some one, and those of us witnessing the procedure, like myself who looking at the women whether Jenny was not among them. Lucky we were safe this time. But as that kind of selection were repeating we came to realize that no one was safe. I spoke to some friends in the Jewish office and Jewish police, asking to do me a big favor, that in case of the Ghetto liquidation they should send me together with Jenny and her family.

They told me that they will do everything they can to keep us together when the time will come, nobody could do more. At that time I could not see my life with out Jenny, I knew wherever she will go so will I. As the weather got warmer they allowed on sundays afternoon officially to get together with women on the streets of the camp. What a joyous parade it was, the girls pulled out the best cloths they had to cheer up their husbands, boyfriends and lovers. I never described Jenny, she was not a beauty, but she had a lovely kind face, beautiful long brown hair and eyes, almost my hight and the figure envied by women in the camp. She was known to have most shapely legs. On the first Sunday afternoon she was dressed in a long sleeve white blouse, black skirt with the streps over her shoulders, high hill shoes, she looked beautiful. I could not hide my admiration, walking together to a cat calls of other men, the thought flashed through my mind why didn't we meet in some other time under different circumstances, what a pitty.

But we had to live one day at the time. I had to concider myself fortunate to be able to see Jenny almost whenever I wanted. Those were the shining days at the most miserable time of my life, and those Sundays as a rays of hope, followed by a dark week in the camp shops. I have to describe an other memorable encounter.

One day about noon time I got an order from the Jewish police to send one electrician to the Gestapo in the city. As soon the man will be ready with his tools, the SS.man will escort him to the Gestapo headquarter. It was a dreadfull assignment, because we knew that quite often people who went to work for the Gestapo never returned. Some returned very badly beaten, with out any reason. And now I had to send one of my man over there. With a light sarcastic smile I told my men that one of them will have to go to the Gestapo, I did not know what kind of work they would have to do. I asked for the volunteer. There was a grave silence in the room, there were no volunteers, only silence. I realized that I have to choose the best man I have in the group. So as the silence persisted I turned to Joseph, "you are a good electrician" I told him "you will be able to handle what ever they will ask you to do". He looked at me with fear in his face, and begged me not to send him, because he was wearing eye glasses,

should they knock off his glasses he will not be able to see anything and they will kill him, he had a point. So I turned to others and each had a good reason not to be sent to Gestapo.

I turned to a young man by name Shulim, whom I knew from Ghetto and who was a pretty good electrician. Before I finished my question he ran out the door like he would be running from the fire. I ran after him, grabbed him at the end of the street, asking him what was the matter with him, that some body had to go. He said that he was scared to death, that he will not be able to do the job and they will kill him. I could see he was scared and that was very fatalistic statement, I told him that I am scared too. So I came back to the shop did not tell what happened, started to gether my tools, told them that if from 36 men no one wants to go then I will go myself, everybody was silent. I put the tools in my tool box which I made long time before, my tools were in a very good order in the box, and professional looking. I sent the word to the Jewish police that we are ready and to send the SS. man escort. I did not want to tell them that I was going myself fearing that they will stop me. I also told my men not to tell Jenny that I went to Gestapo. I took my tool box and went out where the SS. man was waiting for me. It was almost 20 min. walk so I was wondering what a reception I will get by entering the Gestapo. My escort SS. man reported the delivery of the electrician they requested, and then it was my turn. I approached the window, told the SS. man that I was the electrician they ask for from the camp, for the electrical job. I openned my tool box to show what I had in it, looking over my shoulder whether some other SS. man would not hit me with the whip, because that is what they usually did. To my surprise there was nobody, the SS. man looked at my tools and in a fluent polish asked me to wait, that SS. Lieutenant from the Sturmbanfuhrer Mak office will show me what has to be done. I stepped away holding my tool box. I was sure I will be facing the Sturmbanfuhrer Mak, the same who did the killing in the Ghetto and hit me on the forehead with his whip. It was not a pleasant prospect to face him, but I maintained my calm. Then came in the Lieutenant, the SS. man told him that he inspected my tool box and he found it very orderly placed tools, which was very nice of him to say. I followed the Lieutenant to the second floor office.

He started from Mak's office, explaining that they wanted a box with 6 buttons and buzzers in the next 6 rooms, he showed me to the other rooms, I quickly figured out what I will need to do the job. We came to the main stairway and SS. Sturmbanfuhrer Mak appeared. The Lieutenant with a laud "Heil Hitler" reported that he showed me what has to be done. Mak turned to me and said that by 8 o'clock sharp it has to be done. I had only few seconds to repply, the last few years were racing throught my mind, I knew I am facing a killer, to say yes and not to be able to do it he will kill me for lying to him. I did not want to give him the satisfaction, so I streighten out myself even more trying to appear most respectful and said: " Herr Sturmbanfuhrer with do respect you do know how much time it takes to do that kind of wiring," (I was talking fast, because I saw him boiling,) and here it came, "you dirty pig, dog, Jew, you Jew are telling me that it can not be done,?" repeating "you pig, dog, Jew," he was hollering and the echo on the stairway was carrying his voice through the building. I was glancing at his hand and was sure he will draw his pistol and it will be the end of me. Some how he did not shot me, and after his outrage I started again. I was pleading that if he will give me the permission to go with the guard accross the street to the Electrical Engineering I was working for before, I will gether the needed material, then I will go back to the camp, build the 6 stations pushbutttons, get everything ready and tomorrow morning if the guard will pick me up after 6 o clock, then by 12 o clock I should have the job done. The gun was not out, he looked at me and if nothing happened he said O.K., turned around and disappeared behind the door, even his Lieutenant sad "WOW". We went downstairs, I asked the Lieutenant to give me the escort SS.man to take me first to the electrical shop accross the street, to get the material, then bring me back to the camp. I even asked the Lieutenant whether it will be O.K. to tell the Engineering shop to send the bill for the material to the Gestapo, he said it is O.K., and he will arrange every thing. Shortly after I walked in with my SS.escort to the Engineering shop. There was engineer Pinski himself, his daughter and a counter man. They were supriised to see me with the SS.escort, because the last time I was in the shop it was before the Ghetto liquidation. He shook my hand and I saw the tears in his daughters eyes,

she turned her head away and went to the back of the store. As the armed SS. man was behind me we could not talk, I only said that I was in a closed camp and was send to do some work for the Gestapo Sturmbanfuhrer Mak. He looked at me like saing "I know what you are facing". I told him what I needed, telling him to send the bill to the Gestapo, he said not to worry, turned to the counter man and said in German so the SS.guard would understand and not to get suspicious, to give Mr. Landau whatever he needs, and if they dont have something, to get it, he put the accent on "get it", and deliver it tommorow to the Gestapo. He gave me pat on the shoulder, saing once again glad to see you and went out. I did not see this fine Pole any more. Luckily I got everything I needed, put it in the sack and was headed back to the camp with my SS. guardian angel. As I was walking I was reviewing in my head the events of the day, very traumatic day, I came to conclusion that may be it was a lucky day that I was the one who faced the Gestapo and Sturmbanfuhrer Mak. I was better equipped to face those people starting with my posture, better commend of German language, my professional training, even my tool box, better than any of the other men. I was wondering who put the words in my mouth that were able to calm down that killer, I probably will never know, but the most important was I came out this day with out a scratch, and we were only living one day at the time.

We arrived at the gate and my SS. guard told the guard at the gate what I have in the sack, the electrical material for the job I will be doing for the Gestapo, and tomorrow morning he will pick me up. They saluted each other, he left and I was inside the camp again. I was approached by the Jewish police and told to report to the Jewish office, I went there and was mildly reprimended for going myself to the Gestapo, that the orders were to send one of the man. I said that I knew but I thought that I was better prepared to face the technical situation than any other man in the shop, and now I dont have the time to explain everything what happend because I have work to do for tomorrow for Mak, which I promissed to get done by 12 o'clock, and you know what will happen if I will not get it done. I have everything I need for the job, but have to prepare it, what will take some time, probably most of the night. So they let me go, the Jewish police man told me that they know about how Mak jumped at me at the Gestapo.

I could not imagine how could they know, but I learned some other time. As the time was late and I had so much to do, I still ran to the womens building to tell Jenny that I am still here, after a big hug I only said that everything is O.K.,but I have a lot of work to do for tomorrow and very little time. So she did not ask anything any more, we hugged again, she only said to be carefull, and I ran back to the shop. Everybody was glad to see me, but I could tell they felt guilty and were very quiet. When the time came to go back to sleeping quarters I kept two men Jack and Max to help me get ready everything for tomorrow. We did not talk to each other, I only told them what to do, and from the sketch I gave to Jack did usk him to make the box for the 6 pushbuttons I needed for Sturmbanfuhrer Mak desk. Jack went to carpenter shop, I told him to do a good job because Mak is very fussy. I made a wiring diagram for myself, and Max got my list to prepare everything I will need for the job. Jack came back with the box, he did a very good job, we stained the box, polished, mounted the 6 buttons and everything looked good to me.

I looked through every piece of the material, every nail, every staple, every tool I would need. Because I knew that while working for Gestapo one can not stop and say " Sorry, I do not have a tool, I have to go back to get it", that would mean a sure death. I went through it over and over again, so by midnight I was sure that I had everything to face the next day. We quit and went to our sleeping quarters.

After 6 in the morning I headed toward the gate, with my tools and all the materials needed for the job. I had to wait a while for the escort, then we were on the way. I could not help to think again that I will have to face the Sturmbanfuhrer Mak again, I was wonderring in what mood or state of mind he is going to be, whether he will be interested in the job I was going to do, or harass me again, or what if they decide to beat me up and get me in the condition that I will not be able to do the job, then they will have a good excuse to finish me of. I decided to put the pessimistic thoughts out,telling myself that it was bad enough yesterday and I survived, so I was thinking of Jenny, and happy optimistic spirit took over.

We arrived again in the hallway of the Gestapo, the escorting SS.man reported me in, then I had to report, I quickly openned my bag showing all the material and components I was bringing in.

I had to be very careful because there were all over heavy armed SS.men, as the Gestapo was from time to time machine gunned, by the Polish partisans, so to have somebody walking in with a bag of something could be very suspicious, and the SS.men mostly were shooting before asking questions, therefore I stood close to my SS.guard until the SS. Lieutenant, who was Maks secretary, would pick me up. He took me to Maks office, a large room with large desk and leather upholstered chairs under the walls. I asked the Lieutenant permission to unload my stuff in the corridor as not to make a mess in the office. He liked the idea and said it was allright. I unloaded everything and as I saw that he was going to stay with me, I decided to explain him the procedure of my work, he saw all the components on the floor. I took out my wiring diagram, showed and explained to him, he nodded his head, saying " very good, very good ". Then I explained to him that first I was going to mount the low voltage transformer in the hallway, because the transformers are humming and MR. Mak could get annoyed. Then I was going to mount in each room a buzzer under the desk, and after that will string the wires and connect them to the 6 pushbuttons box on MR. MAK desk. So I got the full approval and started to work. Maybe today describing all the details sounds ridiculous and they were, but I knew the Germans and their way of thinking. I learned that proper approach sometimes could prevent the heavy beating and even death. As I was working the Lieutenant was watching me very careful, how I was doing, he must have known something about electrical work, because he was especially attentive where certain things had to be done just right to prevent break down in the future. So I passed the test, by 11 o'clock I was finished with the wiring and back in MR. Mak's office with intention of connecting the wires to the push button box. Suddenly the Lieutenant came to attention, with laud "Heil Hitler " the Sturmbanfuhrer Mak walked in heading straight toward me, I too jumped to attention, he motioned to get at ease, he looked at the box I was working on and seemed to be satisfied. I told him that I am almost finished, and it is left only to connect the buttons. What I heard next, I could not believe my ears. In a very nice voice he excused himself for the interruption, but he was going to have a meeting in his office, and I would have to wait for a while. He said that in the mean time

I should go down to the kitchen, and tell the cook to make me some bacon and eggs for lunch, and he will send for me when he will be through. I did not know what to say, I knew that Gestapo could shoot one for having a drink of water, and he was telling me to go down and ask for bacon and eggs. He understood my dilemma, and with a smile motioned to the Lieutenant to go with me and give me a good lunch, which he did. It was a very long time since I had bacon, eggs, bread with butter, and even coffee as compliments of SS. Mr. Mak, who only yesterday called me a dirty pig, dog, Jew. I only regretted that I could not take anything for Jenny and her family. An hour later, I was called back, escorted by the Lieutenant to Mr. Mak's office. I finished the connection, tested everything, it worked as it was suppose to, the Lieutenant said only " very good, very good ". I packed my tools, he escorted me down, and with an other SS.man I was on my way to the camp. After I came to the camp everybody was glad to see me back in the shop, without a scratch, I could feel they felt guilty. I shortly described the two days happenings, and that no one should feel guilty, that by a sheer luck it turned out for the best. I was not trying to get credit for anything, I would have preferred not to be there, but when I was facing the Sturmbanfuhrer Mak with his demands I was glad that it was I and not one of them. I had the feeling that with a luck I will survive, so "let's celebrate" I suggested to them. Every body pulled out whatever they had; a piece of cheese, kielbasa, bread even vodka, so we celebrated. After the bacon and eggs I was not hungry, but I had some shnaps with the boys. Then I had to report to the Jewish office and police. I supplied more details. Then I asked how did they know about my encounter with Mr. Mak, I was told that two Jews were on a permanent assignment in the Gestapo, they were father and son, undertakers by profession, they lived there and their function was to secretly bury the Poles who were caught as underground or partisans, interrogated tortured and executed. It was convenient for the Gestapo to do the burying job by the Jews, so that gruesome activity of the Gestapo would not spread to the Polish population. As those two were coming to the camp for some tools, they told the Jewish office about Mak's hollering, and cursing somebody worse than they had ever heard. They were prepared for shooting and burial. Then all of sudden everything was quiet. They did not know who it was, but the Jewish office told

them that it was an electrician from the camp. They could not believe that I survive the encounter like this, and come out without a scratch, made me think for a moment that maybe the Gestapo changed their ways, but it was not so. Many others doing some work for them were beaten and abused after that. I went to the laundry shop to assure Jenny that I was O.K., but by her smile, I could see the fear in her eyes. We came to the point in our relationship that sometimes unrealistic hopes and dreams were bringing fears of losing each other. That is the feeling when one is not afraid for his own life, but for the life of the one he loves. This was very natural; our fears very real. There were selections again. The SS. were bringing again Jews from the outside towns, put in the corral and selecting some people from the camp for transport to the unknown destination. Nobody knew who would go and who will stay. Sunday afternoon we were permitted to get together and it was like a holiday. We wore our best clothes, usually the six of us who lived together, and Jenny would join us and she was like a beacon of inspiration to all of us. Sometimes we managed to organize some drinks, and under the influence our spirits and humor were up. We even made jokes, and laughed about our situation. When the alcohol wore off, the pain and uncertainty came back. We all had some loved-ones who went with the Ghetto liquidation, from whom we did not hear since then. We only heard some rumors that they were in the extermination camps, which we did not want to believe. Still, fear was always there. We tried to console each other, hoping for the best. I saw Jenny as much as I could during the day in the laundry, or in the evening in the woman's building where Jenny was sharing a room with three other girls from the laundry. We always had so much to say to each other about the past, present and even the future. We were dreaming of what we thought may be or would be ours. She had a very beautiful Polish love song that she was always singing, to lift my spirits or clouding our dreams.

Who will coddle himself to me so tender as you?

Who will give me all the feelings through the nights and days?

Who will give me from the heart more than you?

Who will coddle himself to me so tender as you?

This is my English translation.

To me the Polish version has an unforgettable meaning and here it is in Polish:

Kto się domnie przytuli tak gorąco jak ty ?
 Kto mi odda najczulej wszystkie noce i dni ?
 Kto mi z serca da więcej nikt tylko ty ?
 Kto się domnie przytuli tak gorąco jak ty.?

That became our mutual song of hope and inspiration, unfortunately on a very shaky ground. We went through more selections, and although Jenny, her family, I and the electrical shop survived, nobody could forget the trauma of those who were separated from their loved ones, and sent to the unknown. The cries and prayers were echoing to the silent skies until everybody was gone, and the one who stayed behind had to deal alone with their sorrows. After every selection like that, the camp was awfully quiet. The deported were lost not only to the individuals, but to all of us. Visiting Jenny, I found her in a very gloomy mood. She started to cry, asking who would be the next, and when would we see each other the last time. I could not find a very convincing answer, feeling inside the same fear. I held her hands, assuring her that I made arrangement that when our time would come, we will go together. With tears, she told me that she did not want to be alone anymore. Her tone worried me. She kept saying that should we get separated, in some camps women are used and abused and after the war, she would not like to give me something that somebody else had used. I held her tight. I thanked her for the concern, but I told her that the most important thing is to survive. Should we survive, there would be no question how we did, but we would begin a new chapter of our lives to live happily ever after. I quieted her down, trying to hide my own fear. That was the summer of 1943.

I was called a few times to do some work for the Gestapo. Each time I did not even try to send somebody. I went myself. I did not encounter any hostility. I probably had a guardian angel with me.

We heard that the USA. entered the war, and that the Germans were encountering heavy losses in Russia. But, we were not sure whether we would be able to outlast the oppressors, no matter how harsh the conditions were; starvation, cold, mistreatment, selections and

individual killings from time to time, the majority would survive, if not the separation and transportation of the people to the unknown destination. Sometimes with humor, we hid our fears of what the future held for us. The rumors were persistent, rumors which we did not know from where they originated. But, they were the reasons for sleepless nights for all of us. There were rumors that the Rzeszow camp would be liquidated, and we would be sent to a new camp in Szebna. Some optimistic rumors were that people even get food in those camps. This would not be so bad ; maybe we would not starve. I was seeing Jenny very often. Maybe instinctively we were trying to bask in the last rays of sunshine. Then, the fateful day came ; the day we all feared. It was the end of August of 1943, at six o'clock in the morning, truckloads of heavily armed SS.men came in the camp, took positions, surrounding the camp. The Jewish police were running from house to house giving instructions to take our bundles and form into groups of electricians, carpenters, and others on the assembly square. The whole camp was in a hectic stage. Everybody was running somewhere. I jumped to Jenny's building, she was putting her bundles together. I tried to assure her that everything would be alright. I still had two diamonds from my mother's earrings, each one a carat size that I kept for an emergency. I put one in the electric tape and gave it to Jenny. As the SS.men were getting impatient with the Jews running around, we heard a burst of machinegun fire as a warning. So I hugged and kissed tearful Jenny, assuring her again that everything would be alright, and ran to join my group, not realizing that it is the last time I saw Jenny. As we were assembled in groups, our Lagerfuhrer Shubke, with other SS. men, were inspecting the groups. He stopped before me. I saw a sad, but friendly glance in his eyes. Then, he moved on. There were few men taken out from our group. At that time we did not know who they were. Then, we all mostly men were pushed into the corral behind barbed wire. We were joking that we were zoo animals now. I was at the front of the cage, keeping an eye on the group outside, trying in vain to find Jenny, but I did not see her. I could see a lot of what was going on, on the other side. There was pushing and pulling by the SS. men, taking out some people from the group and bringing others. From the crying, we could understand that they were separating one from the others,

and when the people became too unruly, we heard again a burst of machine gun fire as a warning. Toward the afternoon, one group was surrounded by the SS, men, and marched out to the lament and cries of the separated. I tried to recognize the ones who were leaving, but it was too far. Then the rest of the people were driven into our corral, so we were quite tight. In this group were mostly women, and I expected to become reunited with Jenny. I pushed myself to the back and started to ask if someone saw Jenny, but everybody was shaking their heads "no". I was not the only one who was trying to find their loved one. As I was coming to the end of the cage and didn't see Jenny, I was now hollering her name, "Jenny, Jenny". When I reached the barbed wire on the other end, I could not believe that she was not there. I was pushing people around trying to see whether she was behind someone, but she was not there. My whole world collapsed. I charged the barbed wire and was pushed away by the SS man. Then I was grabbed by a woman who was working with Jenny in the laundry and knew both of us very well. She realized what condition I was in, and with tears in her eyes, she told me not to bother looking because Jenny was not here. "But I arranged everything, for us to be together," I said. Later on, I realized how naive I was. My assumptions were that it would work as we planned. I wanted so badly to be together with Jenny that I almost disregard the possibility that we might get separated. I sat down on the ground with my back to the barbed wire and cried helplessly and hopelessly. I was not alone, there were many other men and women in the same situation and each one was trying to bury their sorrow in themselves. We knew that hollering to the sky would not help. Martha; the girl who told me about Jenny, sat down next to me. After a while, she started to talk. She said that she knew what had happened to Jenny. She said that Jenny told her that you were supposed to be together, including Jenny's brother and his wife. They were on their way to join me on the other side of the barbed wire, when some SS man grabbed Jenny's brother and his wife. Her brother started to plead for Jenny, saying she was his sister. So the SS man grabbed Jenny and pushed them to the group to be moved out. We could not believe what happened. It went so fast, and they all were outside the gate. What Martha told me explained why Jenny was not here. This twist of fate deepened my sorrow,

it could only be understood by someone who has gone through it. We slept on the ground. It rained and we got wet. We spent the night in the corral, everyone with his own sorrows, pains, and his own thoughts. In the morning, we were ordered to get ready to march out. We got neither food nor water. Because it rained at night, we were able to catch some water. We were suspecting that we will be sent out somewhere, so everybody had some bread and horse kelbasa in our bundles. The SS. men opened the gate and we started to march to the railroad station where we were put in the cattle cars. The rumor spread that our destination was Szebna, located south of Rzeszow, but the yesterday's transport destination was unknown. As for me, something died inside me and apathy took over. When Jenny and I were separated the first time, I had a feeling that we will meet again, and we did. But not this time. I could not forget the tearful hug and kiss, not knowing that it was our last embrace. Now sitting in the moving cattle car, to the monotonous sound of the wheels on the tracks, I could not find inspiration or hope anymore. Just a blank with the question. " Is it worth to go on anymore ? " In the afternoon, we arrived at our destination: Szebna, a small village in the mountainous region of Southern Poland. We were unloaded from the cars by SS. men , shouting and pushing the men first and then the women. We marched to the camp, which was a real concentration camp. As we were coming through the very neat SS. barracks which were separated with barbed wire fence and guards around. From the main gate we could see the concentration camp. We faced the big field with large barracks on the sides of it, and again the barbed wire fence and the armed guards around. I felt like the next step was into oblivion. We marched to the center of the field with the guards behind us. We found out that the Jewish police and the Jewish Judenrat from Rzeszow almost all were sent with the transport to the unknown. Only a few were left in Rzeszow. I lost two or three of my electricians, I did not know when and how. My depression and apathy was so deep that I did not care what was going on around me. Yet, somehow, a subconscious observation power was in me so even today, after so many years, I so clearly remember the events. But, I do not remember the names of the people who were together with me. Except for few names which were engraved in my mind, the rest of the names are completely erased, which bothers me today.

Coming back to the first gathering and inspection in Szebna, we found out that some Jews were there already, and they joined us. We had a new Jewish Lagerfuhrer who was also a head of Jewish police. He was a German Jew who held a rank of Captain in World War 1, and acted much like a German. We were counted, and he reported the numbers to the SS. Lagerfuhrer. After assigning us in groups to the barracks, we were dismissed after the long grueling day. We did not look or analyze the situation. We knew we were like the animals in the stables; one small bunk with a little straw on it. But after the night before, on the ground in the corral and rain, the bunk was't too bad. I was thinking of Jenny and others, my heart was bleeding, but still hoping maybe, that they fared better than we. Before I flopped on my bunk, I looked at myself. As much as I was down, I was not ready to give up, and be tramped in the gutter. My blue coveralls were covered with dirt. I pulled them off, and having no hope of washing them, I decided to discard them. Another reason for doing that was that I did not want to be the electrician in the blue coveralls anymore. I did not want to be a leader, or have any responsibility. I flopped on my bunk. My last thought was that maybe I will see Jenny in my dreams. I was out in a second. The next day at six in the morning, we were out on the square trying to assess what the purpose was for us being here. I was surrounded mostly by my men, who looking at me, wondered where my coveralls were. I told them that I was not anybody's leader anymore, that I never wanted to be one in the past, so no more electrician with the blue coveralls. It was nice to hear from them that they felt a little more secure with me being in charge of the electrical group. I did not want to tell them my own pain and turmoil. Probably the past tragic events were shaping me. There were two choices; to either give up, or endure. To give up meant sure death. To go on with a strong will to survive, gave a very slight chance to live. Probably the inner me chose survival. Because they did not take our bundles, we were in our own clothes; dressed pretty well. I myself was wearing high boots, good pants, and a nice jacket. In the barrack, I had a three-quarter warm jacket, hoping that we would be able to retain those meager personal possessions. The whole camp was disorganized, but we learned that many more people were here and still more were coming from other towns and cities.

We also found that about eight hundred Poles were here, too (men and women). That was a little bit encouraging, because Poles were not handled as harshly as were the Jews, so maybe the camp as such was not too bad. Pretty soon we had a chance to find out. The SS men moved in, rounded us up, and ordered to form groups of (maybe two hundred men) to make a circle, and heavy armed SS soldiers surrounded us. First we could not make out what this was all about. Then, the SS men turned to us and ordered all valuables to be put out in the center of the circle. We were given five minutes. They repeated, "Everything! Watches, rings, money, diamonds, silver." We looked at each other, knowing it was not a joke, and started to put down and make a pile of the valuables. I had a watch which I put down. Then, my necklace that was given to me by Jenny. I had the nerve to ask the SS man if I could keep it, saying that it was worthless, but from my wife. He pointed the gun to my belly, saying angrily: "I said everything." So, I parted with the only thing that was dear to me. As everyone emptied their pockets, the pile became a good size. We were back in the circle. The SS men said, "Time is up," and asked whether everything was out. There was silence. I had my mother's diamond under my tongue. The SS man pulled one man out, checked his pockets and found some money (I think some dollars). He started to yell and kick the man, saying you dirty Jews, you are all liars, you could not be trusted. His anger was so real that it looked as if we had taken away from them something, not the other way around. After what came next, we could not believe our eyes. He told the man to face down on the ground, and sent a burst of bullets into the back of his head. Needless to say the shock we all experienced. As for myself, it was not fear, but shock to see a man alive just a few minutes before, then dead a few seconds later. I am sure he overlooked the money, but no matter what, he was dead. The SS man turned to us again, gave us two minutes time to make sure we emptied everything. If not, we all will be on the pile. I spit out the diamond and buried it in the dirt under my foot. We did not know whether we will not get shot while stepping over to the pile, but not having any choice, people began stepping over to the pile, which became twice the size as it was before. The SS men were yelling and cursing, how dishonest the Jews are. After that, we were marched to our designated barracks where the shops like the electrical, carpentry, and mechanical were supposed to be.

We were all in big shock. We did not know how many casualties were there in other groups. We did not ask. Everybody was in his own thoughts. More people were coming from other towns, and some were assigned to us as electricians. The shop swelled up to fifty-two men. I was glad that I was not in charge. I noticed that in the electrician's group from the other town was a young man of about fifteen years old. I was wondering how at such a young age, he could become an electrician. But since at this time, everybody was trying to save his life, it did not really matter. The young man came to the center and asked who was in charge of the electrician's group. I stepped out and said that nobody was in charge. He said it was good because the Sturmbanfuhrer in Bochnia, that was the name of the town he came from, did appoint him as a capo for the electrical shop. I looked at him and sarcastically did say, so, take it over. He knew that he did not have a friendly group, but we also knew that boys like this were very dangerous, they were usually planted by the Gestapo to spy on the rest of the men. He was lost in the group of fifty-two electricians and we ignored him. But, we had to be careful because we had a potential informer in our group. I was like in a daze. I did not care what happened around me. The men tried to cheer me up, because they knew what I was going through. Jokingly they pointed to the big business we are in, with fifty-two men, and wondered what we are going to do. It was nice of them. But I did not care. I was waiting for the night to go to sleep, and hoped to see Jenny in my dreams. But the reality was coming very quickly to us. The camp started to get organized. We were getting some bread rations and soup. Only enough to starve slowly. On the third day, we had six o'clock inspection, staying in rows four men deep. I was wondering why everyone was trying to be in the back. It was because when the SS. men were inspecting and did not like somebody's face in the front line, they would hit that person on the head with a whip, so everybody did feel more safe behind the first row. I felt that whatever had to come, would come. So, I always found myself in the front. Waiting for the inspection, we realized that we were about three thousand Jews, and eight hundred Poles. The women were on one side, and the men were on the opposite.

Then came out our Jewish Lagerfuhrer and Obersharfuhrer Grzymek. He was in the center of the field and so was our group. Being in the front row, I was about one hundred feet from him. Our Jewish Lagerfuhrer reported the condition of the camp and stepped aside. Grzymek looked around, and gave us a very encouraging speech. He told us his name and his rank, and said if we will work hard for the German Reich, he would be like father to us. Someone in the back of me said, " Liar, killer, liquidator, I know him." Somebody pushed him to keep quiet, and we continued to listen to the good news that our good Lagerfuhrer was sharing with us. All we had to do according to him was to work hard, be honest, and as a reward women would even get silk stockings. That was the best speech I ever heard, especially from the SS. Lagerfuhrer. Then he turned around and asked who was the leader of the electrical department, to step forward. The chill went through my spine, but to our surprise, the fifteen year old boy stepped forward. Grzymek motioned to him to come closer, looking at him with suspicion. But the young man; Sam was his name, reported that in Bochnia, the Sturmabfuhrer made him Capo of the electrical shop. Grzymek said, " So you want to be in charge ? O.K. by tomorrow I want to have electric lights in all of the barracks." That did sound to me like Gestapo SS. Mak in Rzeszow presenting me with the impossible. The young man was saying, " Yes-Sir." My men began to push me out, begging me to do something. By saying yes to the Lagerfuhrer, this young idiot was signing his and our death sentences. You do not say to the SS. people, "Yes," and later tell them you cannot do it. I did agree with my men. They kept pushing me out. So I stepped forward. The Lagerfuhrer saw me stepping out of line, and asked me to come closer. I approached, and standing at attention next to Sam, started to talk. "Sir Lagerfuhrer, I am an electrician and was in charge of thirty-six electricians in Rzeszow. We all heard that by tomorrow you want to have the lights in all of the barracks. This young man was a Capo electrician in Bochnia. To say that he could electrify all the barracks by tomorrow showed that maybe he was a good electrician, but had little experience in estimating how much time would be needed to do a job like the one you Sir are asking for. I was watching for his reaction. I said almost the same words I said to Sturmabfuhrer Mak in Rzeszow. Grzymek listened,

so I continued that the job would need a lot of sockets, wire, bulbs, and other materials. Also, that we are here only three days and don't know where the material is or whether we would find enough for the job. Again, I said a big, "Sir, with your permission, after the inspection, I will go to the material storage barrack, made a list of the material, then report to you." I was wondering whether I had exhausted his patience. For a second, he looked at me and said, " You do that." Again he looked at me ignoring Sam, and said to report to him in the afternoon. Then he told the Jewish police to see to it that I got everything I needed. Then he motioned to us to join the line. My men if they could, would carry me on their shoulders. But for myself, I thought that whether I wanted to be or not, again I was in charge. I knew that I handled the situation well. I only wondered what kind of power guided me. After the inspection, we came to the shop. We all fifty-two men agreed that the job either will make or break us. After yesterday's killing, we saw how little value life had; that anything could happen. At the front of the camp near the gate was a large barrack which was a warehouse. You name it, it was there. Everything that was gathered after the Rzeszow camp liquidation. I was looking for electrical material. The man in charge showed me where the material was. His name was Jacob. And it was there a secretary, a German Jewish girl by name Rose, who kept track of everything, I found what I needed, and was surprised how much of everything was there. On a quick estimate, I was sure we had enough wire and sockets for all the barracks, and that was the most important thing. I was thinking now how to do the job in the shortest time. I had to go to Grzymek and give him a workable realistic plan. I went to the shop thinking what to tell Grzymek when I will go to see him. Then I went to the main gate and and told the SS. guard that as an electrician, I have to report to the Lagerfuhrer. On a cranked phone, he called up and apparently got an O'kay to let me in. I went to the barracks where his office was. The SS. guard let me in, and again I was facing the Lagerfuhrer Grzymek, who asked me what was up. I told him that in the warehouse we had enough wire and other materials to do the job, but as he wants the the lights in all the barracks as soon as possible, with his permission I would tell him my plan the way I was going to do it. He was nodding his head in approval.

So I continued. As the barracks are close together, I would spread the wire over the roofs, and taping them to each barrack, inside would be six sockets with one hundred watt bulbs and a switch at the entrance. The loop wires from the source and back to the source would minimize the loss of voltage from the long distance. He must have known something about this because he readily agreed. I confirmed that it was not the safest way, but for the short time we would make it as safe as possible, and in three days we would have the power in all the barracks. Then, we would get back to the barrack one and down the line, lift the wires from the roof into the air, making the installation so as supposed to be according to the electrical safety code, " With your permission Sir! I was watching him from time to time, wondering whether I was stretching his patience to the limit. To my surprise, he was very attentive, and when I finished he only said to go ahead and do it. I stood at attention and then left the room. I went back to the shop, wondering about the smoothness of the operation, almost like in normal times. But, we were living far from normal circumstances. In the shop I got six men, we found a two wheeled carriage and went to the storage barrack. We loaded the wires and related materials and went back to the electrical shop. I gathered the rest of the men, told them what to do, and how to do it. We were fifty-two men and we had only three days. So, we had to start right away. Everybody would grab two sockets and put on them ten centimeter pigtails. By the end of the day, we had one hundred twenty sockets ready for insallation. After the evening inspection, we were back in the barracks and after meager supper soup, we all flopped on our bunks without bothering to undress. I was wondering when the lice will start to eat us up. I was lying with my eyes open, feeling guilty for not thinking of Jenny during the daytime, wondering where she and everybody else was. My mother, father, brother lost so long ago. I wondered whether they survived. With all of them on my mind, I fell asleep. The next morning, after the inspection we went back to the shop. I asked for the men with outside work experience, that were not afraid of heights to walk on the roofs of the barracks. I told the one who stepped forward to choose two men and they would be the ones to string the main line from barrack to barrack. I assigned the rest of the men with detailed instructions for the wiring inside of the barracks.

I told them that things look very good for us, because after finishing the installation of the lights, we as a group will have a lot of work to do to get the whole installation to maximum safety code standards. It worried me before what a group of fifty- two electricians will be doing in this camp, now the things looked good. For some time we would have enough work. In an hour everybody was at work. I was glad to see that everything worked like a well oiled machine. Not that we were so eager to work for the Germans, but it was only the way to survive. Everybody was out except the little Sam. I told him that I didn't give a damn, that he could sit and play a big Capo, he could wait for his Sturmbanfuhrer to get here and adopt him as his son. But could he explain to me why when the Lagerfuhrer told him to have the lights done by today, you said, " Yes sir ?" How would you do it ? You knew that by saying yes, you signed your own death sentence, and possibly other electricians too. I stepped out, not to be a leader or to be in charge of this job, or any other work, but to save my friends and an idiot like you. You know when I spoke to Grzymek, he ignored you completely. So, you may do what you want, but stay away from me. You are lucky that Grzymek did not take your " Yes sir " seriously. You would be a dead pigeon today. I left him all shook up. Then I went to see how my men were doing. To my surprise, the job went very well. Maybe today somebody is thinking, " Big deal, they had to do some wiring." But, As I was watching my men jumping from barrack to barrack, doing their outmost because they knew that we had a time limit for the job, I thought of my promise to Grzymek, and my head was first on the chopping block and my men's heads were next. We knew how ridiculous it was, but to make promise to the Lagerfuhrer, and then not to fulfill it was a capital sin, and almost sure, most of the time punished by death. I went back to the shop to prepare the needed material. Two Jewish men approached me. One was a husky six-footer named Tad and the other was Soul. Tad told me that they were electricians and here already for three months, before anybody else came. Their job was, and still is, to take care of the boiler room, of the SS. barracks and the " Castle," what was Sturmbanfuhrer's residence on the top of the hill, from which he almost never comes to the camp. The other thing I was told that there is a Jewish man who is Sturmbanfuhrer's personal driver, and the Jewish German girl Rose ;

the one from the warehouse, she was quite often invited to the "Castle" to the Sturmbanfuhrer's dinners. I did find it interesting, but not any of my concern, Tad said as long as I was in charge which I denied, but he insisted that I was, he therefore wanted to tell me what was going on in the camp. He and Soul had a room next to the boiler room, and a little repair facility to take care of the boilers. They slept there and advised me to get to know this part of camp, in case the Lagerfuhrer would have any questions. As I was very busy with the wiring job we were doing, I told them that I will look into it sometime in the future. The next two days were very hectic. Everybody was working feverishly to meet the deadline. As I was checking the progress of the work, I went to the women's barrack's. There were many women who knew Jenny and me. I got few warm invitations. Many of them had losses of dear ones like I did, and I understood their suffering and loneliness, but I was not equipped in those times to bring the comfort to the one who suffered. On the third day's afternoon, I was able to make the final connection to the power line located in the SS. part of the camp. I got back and tested every barrack separately. The light uplifted the spirits of the people a little bit. Then, I went and reported to the Lagerfuhrer Grzymek, that we had lights in all of the barracks. He only said, "Very good, very good. " Then, I continued that the job we did was very primitive and temporary, that with his permission, we would start to upgrade the whole system. He nodded with his head that it would be okay. I stood at attention, and left the room. This okay gave us electricians a lot of work for the future, and freedom of movement for my men inside the camp.

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After we completed the first stage of the wiring, I left the groups of the electricians as they were, with the new assignment of uplifting the whole system. Because having the wires lying on the roofs was dangerous when the heavy rains and then ice and snow would come. I was stressing that it was not the time for relaxation, that we have to move as fast as possible before the bad weather will settle in. The men agreed, we lay out the work plan and everybody went about his assignment. My job was to provide the needed material and just to supervise the whole operation. If not the barbed wires, the heavy SS guards and starvation it would have been almost like running the regular electrical business with 50 electricians. To run this kind of business was never easy, especially in our circumstances. I finally had the time to look around and find out what was the structure of the camp. I saw that besides the SS men we had also Ukrainian SS guards, they were keeping guard outside the barbed wire around the camp. They were not any better than the Germans but they could be bribed. As I said my men had more freedom of movement, some found the way to bribe the guards to look the other way when the Poles came to the fence to exchange some food for the valuables. Some groups were sent to work on the SS side of the camp, they had a chance to get in touch with outsiders, so the business of survival was in full swing regardless of a danger of being shot. It became apparent to me that when the SS men were taking away the valuables on the second day of our arrival at the camp, they did not get everything, some people managed to hide, sewed in cloths or some other ways. Now they were taking out, giving to one who had the opportunity to get to the fence and to make some deals with Poles for food. Everybody tried his way to survive. I went to see Tad and Soul in the boiler room. I was surprised what I saw and learned some more. They had a room with 4 bunk beds and a little conveniences like a stove, with them lived a young Jewish camp policeman. In the boiler room was a laundry where the Polish girls were working. So having the contact with them was very beneficial for both of them Jews and Poles. As the Poles had more freedom and were treated less harshly than the Jews, their relatives were coming to the fence every week bribing the Ukrainian guards and bringing the supplies of food to the girls.

Tad would give girls some valuables which he got from others and the girls would give it to their relatives for the exchange for food. I was not surprised when Soul offered me eggs, bread and margarine. Then Tad told me to move with them since they had an empty bunk, and assured me that I will not starve. I hesitated, but he reasoned with me that my men have a freedom of moving around the camp, they have an opportunity to provide for themselves, but I can not go to the fence and wheel and deal, that I better keep the SS men and Grzymek happy and off our necks, may be we will survive. I had to admit that he made sense. I moved in with them, occupying the bunk under the policeman. Tad was a nice guy, but Soul who was much older than we, may be 45 years old and limping complained to me that he was treated like a servant. I did not know how good as electricians they both were, but that was not the point. Tad had more in common with me, his father was also electrician in one of the towns, but being 6 footer and a little bit in charge, he forgot that nobody is a boss, that any one of us at any moment can wind up with a bullet in his head, therefore there was no reason to play big and I asked him to lay off Soul. So I stayed with Tad, Soul and Frank the policeman. I got to know Frank, he was telling me about his tragic experiences, which were very similar to mine. He too lost the girl friend whom he loved so dearly, he had her pictures and showed to me, lovely young girl. He repeated time and again that he can not live without her, that where they went nobody came back which did sound very pessimistic. It was like a stab in my heart. What if it was true? I developed a mental dialogue with Jenny, when we went to sleep I would lay with my eyes closed, going through the events of the day asking her to do the same and come to me in my dreams, but unfortunately she never came. As the days went by we almost got used to our misery something came up as a reminder what was in store for us. One morning after inspection I went to the electrical shop where I gave the work assignments to my men. then I went to the storage barrack to look for some electrical material. It was a beautiful Indian summer day, some guys were sweeping the yard. I went in the barrack and told Jacob what I was looking for, then I greeted Roze, I always engaged her in the conversation admiring her German language.

She was from Berlin very intelligent girl. I thought no wonder that Sturmbanfuhrer enjoys her company at his dinners. Then I went on digging in the pile for things to be useful for the shop. As I was standing at the window overlooking the whole assembly square I heard some commotion, then I saw Grzymek horse back riding to the camp. With the hand machine gun on his lap he stopped and aimed the gun at the Jew who was sweeping the yard. In those few second the Jew jumped toward him, grabbed the gun and pulled him down from the horse. In a minute the SS men around were alerted, they jumped the Jewish man, kicking and beating him, and pulled him by the legs to the gate. Grzymek shaken up, mounted the horse and went to the SS side of the camp. The man was hung head down at the gate for everyone to see. I called Jacob and Roze to see what happened, we all stood there speechless. I dont know why I always had to be the witness to all thouse cruelties. That was not the end, the man was hanging there the whole day, then 5 o, clock we all were called to the assembly square, we were staying in shape of square at 4 men deep, SS men surrounded us, they drove 6 foot pole in the ground, then they dragged the blood covered man by his feet, hung him again with his head down while man was begging to end his life. We were waiting for the Lagerfuhrer Grzymek. Finally he slowly came to the center next to the victim, and after giving us a speech that we should see for ourselves what will happen to any one of us who will dare to attack a German. Slowly he opened his revolver holster, cocked the gun and put a bullet in victims head. Somebody was whispering Kadish. It is 50 years since it happened but I could never forget it.

After we were dismissed the camp of 3000 souls was like a big living grave yard, we did not talk to each other. I myself and I am sure the others were searching and asking whether it was worth to go on, enduring and end up with a bullet in the head as the one we just saw. I probably was only one to see it from the beginning, and was asking myself what would happen if man did not grab Grzymek, he would be dead anyway, the gun was aimed at him. It was mans instinct for self preservation, only one regret that he did not spray the SOB with the bullets. May be he did not know how to activate the gun, and what would have happened if he did? Nobody knows what would be the reaction of anybody being in his situation.

As the SS men were patrolling inside the camp and were in a very bad mood, we all dispersed to our daily activities to stay away from them. After this day I and probably every body else in the camp was trying to deal with the calamity like in the past each in his own way. Asking ourselves how to find the inner strength to go on, or otherwise to break down and parish. For me the night was the great relief when I was able to communicate mentally with Jenny, Mother, Father Brother and all loved ones whom I was still hoping to see some day or to hear from even if only in my dreams.

Few days later I was awoken in the middle of the night by some tossing and groaning of Frank the Jewish policeman who was sleeping above me. At first I did not pay any attention, I thought it was an other nightmare that we all did have. But then I realized that it was not a dream, I climbed Frank's bunk and seeing condition Frank was in I woke up every body. We took him down, put him on the floor, there was no pulse, he was dead with his girlfriends picture in his hand. I closed his eye lids, thinking that his sufferings are over. I thought that Frank ended his life because he could not go on without his girl, and made me think of Romeo and Juliet, what if his love still was alive? We wrapped Frank's body in a blanket and carried it to the boiler room, put it on the floor and went back to the room. We did not sleep any more, we all were buried in our own thoughts. I thought what a pity so young, and then again maybe it is the right way. The morning lights brought us to reality. We had to report to the Jewish Lagerfuhrer, then we three decided to ask for the permission to bury Frank outside the camp, which we received. By noon all the formalities were fulfilled, we got the two wheeled wagon and went on our way to the outside of the fence, joined by two SS guards and two Jewish policemen Frank's friends. Outside we took turns to dig the grave, we unwrapped the body, put the picture of his girlfriend in his hand, someone said the Kadish and we covered the body with earth. So we finished our job as undertakers and returned to the camp. We did not recover from Frank yet, when we were hit with another calamity. One week later we learned that Roze the secretary in the storage barrack was killed. That was a new shock, we learned from Jacob who was in charge there.

He told us one morning SS man came in asked for her, went to her room telling her to get ready, as many times Sturmbanfuhrer was sending for her. According to Jacob she asked to wait combing her beautiful hair, as she was doing it the SS man shot her in the back of her head, killing her instantly, and giving Jacob instruction to bury her. Again the shock waves went through everybody in the camp. Rumors were that the Gestapo was carefully watching the friendship developed between the Sturmbanfuhrer and a Jewish girl, so when he was on assignment away from the camp they decided to kill her. There were rumors that the Sturmbafuhrer was furious but he could not do anything. In case like this the Gestapo usually were threatening the Germans with the sympathy for Jews to send them to the Russian front, would be the end to the good intention of German who did not share the Naxis ideology. We all were getting the feeling that sooner or later we all will be on the chopping block, and the hopelessness of the situation was setting deeper and deeper every day. As for myself the job of keeping 52 men busy everyday occupied my days. One day I got the call to report to Lagerfuhrer Grzymek. I did not forget him when without a hesitation he put the bullet in the head of a helpless man hanging head down. But I had to go. I reported to his office and was told by his assistant that he wants 3 way switches installed in the hallway of the barrack. I quickly took the measurements for the material and left being glad not to have to face the killer. Back in the shop I assigned one man Leon who was a very good electrician, so I did not expect any problems. Together we got all needed material, I made a wiring diagram for him and we went to the SS side of the camp to Grzymeks office barrack. It was 10 o'clock in the morning, I figured that by 1:30 he should be finished with the job. I was busy outside as the guys were stabilizing the wires from barrack to barrack. I came back about 3:00 pm asked about Leon, they did not see him, he did not come back yet. I did not like it, he should have finished his job by now. I rushed to the SS side, made it through the gate toward Grzymeks office, and what I saw if I only could turn back I would, but Grzymek saw me and I had to march forward. I was maybe 50 feet from him, he was sitting on a chair before the entrance door with the machine gun on his lap and a German sheppard dog on his side.

As I was approaching, the dog was snarling and growling, ready to jump. I was wondering whether he will let the dog go, so I hesitated for a moment, then I saw him pulling the dog by the collar and giving the order to lie down. So I came neerer and reported that I came to see how my man is progressing with the job. Slow and sarcastic Grzymek said that man is here for 4 hrs. and he still is not finished, if he will not finish in 10 min. he will kill him. I knew that I have only few seconds to repply, so I started with "Sir with your permission I will help the man and we will have it done soon". After I said that, I realized that I was not sure of it, but it was too late to retrack, I was risking my head too. He motioned me to go in. I saw Leon white like a ghost, sweat was running from his face. I asked him what happened, he told me that from the time I left Grzymek appeared sitting in the door with the machine gun, and the dog snarling and jumping each time he moved. I asked him how far did he get with wiring, he got almost everything but when it came to final connection he could not do it, he tried every connection but it did not work, he did not know what wrong he was doing, he just could not think. I could not ignore the threat from Grzymek to kill Leon. I decided that the best thing to do would be to send him out to the shop, facing the risk of dog getting lose or may be even the shooting by Grzymek, some how my intuition told me to send him away. I told Leon to take the left over wires, put over the shoulder, to leave for me the small tools and a test lamp, take the tool box and slowly to move out, what he did. Now I was sweating waiting for the reaction from the Lagerfuhrer seeing Leon to leave. I was standing in the middle of the corridor waiting what will happen, I heard the dog grawling, saw Leon about 50ft. away and I whiped the sweat from my forehead. Now it was my turn to do the connection on the ceiling. I gave myself a couple of minutes to calm down and concentrate. Funny part is that 3 and 4 way wiring is not too complecated but I saw in the past how many a very good electricians were getting lost at it. I separated all the connections that Leon made, checked the connections on the switches what was very important, then made the final connection to the fixture, I flipped the switch from one side, it lit up, went to the other side turned the switch it went off. I almost wanted to say hurray. I went back to the main connection,

taped up the wires, screwed on the fixture and the switches in place, checking once more, it did work. After cleaning up I went out making sure to be some distance from the dog and reported to the Lagerfuhrer that the job is done. Again sarcastically he said that he knew I will do it, but not Leon, that he is not an electrician but I was.

I don't know why I tried to defend Leon when I said that he was scared and could not see the things clear, he snapped at me "are you not scared"? I replied yes I was scared, but I still could think and do the job. He got up from the chair, motioned to the dog to lie down, with the machine gun in one hand walked in, tested the lights saying "good good" and motioning to me to leave, what I gladly did. Many times later I was wondering what made me to voice my opinion in defense of Leon with a man like Grzymek? The whole incident would be ridiculous in normal circumstances, but those were not normal times, and maybe Leon was lucky that I appeared there in time, if not maybe he would have been killed. I came back to the shop, I did not elaborate, I was glad that it ended the way it did. We all knew that we were like the soldiers under fire that some will get hit and left behind, and others will survive, only we did not know who and how many.

The Polish girls in the boiler room were an inspiration. Tad was mostly dealing with them strictly business. One of them was standing out, her name was Jadwiga we called her Jasia. Her father was a University professor, brother and boyfriend were taken away by Gestapo a year ago and they did not hear from them. She expressed deep grief and sympathy what was happening to us Jews, condemning the Polish population for their behavior toward the Jews, that the Poles are blind, that they did not see that the Jews were only the stepping stone, that the Polish Catholics will be the next for the extermination. She knew what she was talking about. She was the kind of a Pole that I knew and grew up with. It was refreshing to be reassured that not all Poles were the same, that they too were the victims of the German occupation. She always was offering to share her food she was receiving from her family but we declined, not willing to take from her the food she needed for her own survival. Besides Jasia was quite a showgirl, she had a beautiful voice and when it was quiet in the camp she was singing for the girls in the laundry, for us the electricians and two Jewish plumbers assigned to the boiler room. It was one song full of longing and sentiment of faraway world which is imprinted in my mind.

We would put Jasia on the top of the stepladder, she would loosen her blond beautiful hair and delight us with this romantic song. I could translate the song but I could not translate the meaning of it to us all, we were grateful to her for the inspiration.

It was October and unusual warm and nice weather permitted us to finish outside wiring and to concentrate on the inside the barracks work. On the end of the assembly square was a hospital barrack which required a little bit more complicated wiring. On the SS side was an engineering and architecture office where 4 Jewish architects were working. One time I got a word from the Jewish Lagerfuhrer to go to see them, that they needed some help. So I went there where I got to know the engineers Max, Albert, Sam and Kurt. Kurt was in charge, he told me that they need some wiring to be done and some times they need advice for the electrical wiring when they were drawing plans for SS buildings. I did not mind at all to help them out. This SS building was on a hill with the windows to the south and on a clear day, as it was that day, one could see snow covered mountains of "Tatras".

I felt almost like breathing the mountains air, so beautiful and so distant from us. Kurt was saying aloud how beautiful it was. I assured Kurt that whenever they need me I will be glad to help them. I brought a man to do the wiring for them and was spending some time with Kurt or the other draftsmen advising them on electrical installations. Over there I got to know other Polish girls who were coming in to clean the SS barracks. I got more friendly with one who was coming in to clean the engineering room, her name was Kasia. She was a lovely person of the caliber of Jasia in the boiler room, she too was expressing the sympathy for the Jews what they are going through, her boy friend was also arrested by Gestapo some times ago, she had her doubts whether he is still alive. I shared with her my sad story receiving very sincere understanding and sympathy. Those were the brighter moments, moments between the shocks we were receiving.

The bad news in the camp traveled very fast, we learned that draftsman Sam was shot. We learned the circumstances; Sam was walking from the engineering on the SS side to the camp, he pulled something from his pocket, they say it was a handkerchief, at the same time he pulled some money they say it was dollar bills, behind him was a SS man who saw the money and according to one who witnessed, without any question he put a bullet in his head.

As shocking as it was we were slowly getting immuned to the horrors maybe even thinking how careless Sam was having the money in the pocket. What I wanted to point out how psychologically we were getting conditioned that the money in the pocket were the reason for Sam's death. This is what the Germans were conditioning us for, they told us to give up everything. Sam was a dirty Jew who disobeyed therefore had to be killed. I was wondering whether we are getting dehumanized to suffering or it was a sense of self preservation, having in mind "so today was him tomorrow will be I" It was not a good feeling, I hoped never to get to this stage, but I was not so sure whether not all of us are on this ugly road. When I went to the engineering again I was grieving with others the senseless death of Sam and Kasia was sharing our tears. We could not change anything it was an other unforgettable scar. As the days were passing with out calamity we were wondering what is next, and sure enough the next was in motion. One afternoon in late October the SS guards moved into the camp, heavy armed. Jewish police running from barrack to barrack chasing everybody out to the assembly square. Again we formed a large square 4 men deep, surrounded by SS men, they position a heavy machine guns on each end of the square. It looked very gruesome, we did not know what was all about. We realized that it was for Jews only because the poles were not on the square. Then the Jewish Lagerfuhrer reported that every body was present to the SS man who had the machine gun in his hand. He was Oberscharfuhrer Unterhuber, we called him crooked head because his head was leaning to one side and there were rumors that he killed Sam the draftsman. After receiving the report he told us that a horrible thing happened this morning, that the Sturmbanfuhrer in charge of this camp was betrayed by a Jew he trusted. The Jew whom he trusted to be his personal driver escaped taking with him Sturmbanfuhrers car, but he will get caught and the punishment will be with out a mercy. The 3000 man and women were deadly quiet, every body had the feeling that something horrible will happen. The sharfuhrer continued, as punishment for a crime like this to teach the lesson not to run away 5 man and 5 women will be shot. I could not believe what I heard and probably everybody was in shock, it was quiet like in a grave. Then he asked for volunteers, there were none, he asked the second time and one brave woman came forward,

but no more so he started to walk along the lines picking out

the men and women, no begging or tears helped. As I said before nobody wanted to be in the front line, I always was in the front not because I was a hero but because I believed that one can not escape the destiny. I was watching him picking up people, looking at their faces and nobody knew what kind of face to make, what kind of face will please him or which one would displease the man in whose power was one's life or death. He came by me, our eyes met, I don't know what expression was on my face but he moved on and picked the man behind me. We all were numb and helpless, with all the SS men around us and two machine guns in the field one move of any one of us they could kill all of us in 5 min. He got the 5 men and 5 women in the center, I was sure that everybody still was hoping for a miracle. I was thinking maybe it was their cruel scare tactics, but it was not. He ordered the people on the ground faces down, positioned himself at the feet and started to shoot at the back of their heads. To the horror of everybody he turned around to the victims heads and was shooting in the heels. Someone was crying "O God, where are you?" the others were reciting the Kadish. The Obersturmführer satisfied with killing issued a warning that if somebody will try to escape again then 10 men and 10 women will be shot next time. We were dismissed in groups to our barracks. Tad, Saul and I went to our room and flopped on the bunks without a word. I was lying, and the whole my life was passing by like in kaleidoscope, thousand thoughts and questions and no answers, what is life that can be extinguished so easily and quickly without any reason. As much suffering we went through in the past for me this one was one of the worst calamity I witnessed until now. Next day we did not talk to each other, we could not look in each other eyes, we felt guilty that we are alive and they are dead. But what could we do? I knew the fellow who escaped in Sturmbanführer's car, he was Leon Klugier, born and raised in Krakow, he was known bicycle racer and motorcycle rider, we were good friends but I never saw him in Szebna camp. It is true that 5 men and 5 women paid with their lives, it was one of the justifications for killing Jews Gestapo Chief Mak in Rzeszow killed 36 Jews because they were communists, then another SS man killed pregnant woman.

One Jew who did not give all the money and one who tried to protect himself from Grzymeks bullet, or Sam the draftsman all were killed with some justification. I began to realize that Germans will run out of the justifications and they will kill Jews just because they were Jews. For the Nazis did not matter whether one was intelligent, rich or poor we all were Jews and were on the way to extermination. Slowly everything began to come back to so called normal. As long there was no killing it was normal. People began to be suspicious of each other, fearing that one might escape than 10 men and women will get killed. Trying to believe if we will behave we might survive, what an illusion we tried to create for ourselves, probably it was self preservation, we had some thing to hold on, some thing even if it was only a straw. Lucky the winter was not too harsh, not too much snow, it was easier to survive. By December we underwent a selection and about 1500 Jews were sent out, destination unknown. I lost 16 electricians to the transport. We could not figure out what the Germans plans were and what was in store for the rest of us who were left, about another 1500. About that time Tad, Soul and I began to think about escaping regardless of consequences. In lengthy discussions we came to conclusion if we will not escape we will not survive. We had better chance than any body else. The electrical main transformers were outside the fence and we had an access to them for service. So to get out from the camp was not the hardest part, but we did not know exactly where we were. We could see the mountains of Tatras which were to the South and to make the escape successful we had to go South East direction hoping to get to Hungary or Rumania. We could not do it in winter therefore we decided to make all the necessary preparations and make the move in spring. We had to be very careful because of the suspicions and we could be very easily given out by our own people. I was agonizing many nights over our decision, did not forget 5 men and women executed after Leons escape, knowing that this time the punishment will be much more severe, and will we be successful? I had my mental discussion with my Mother, Father and Jenny hoping for a sign of an inspiration in my dreams but I got none. Never the less I had an inner feeling to go and that they would like me to try for freedom.

So our preparation went on, Soul was in charge to gather some food, toast bread what ever we could spare, and Tad to get it outside to the transformers to hide. As we had no maps we needed badly a compass for direction. I remembered when years ago in school I was given an assignment to make a compass which I did and it worked very well. So I took this task on myself Again had to be very careful, to get caught with a compass was a sure bullet in the head. Once we decided to go ahead, we had to be optimistic and believe in success. I was called to report to Jewish police that SS electrical inspector wants to see me, I was thinking what is next, why me? But I was in charge and I had to go. I reported to the SS Sharfuhrer, he was probably my age, did not look mean, so I took it as a good sign. He informed me that he was in charge of the electrical departments in the camps, and if it will be some material that I will need to do the job he will try to get it for me. But in the mean time he wanted to see what we are doing. So I took him on a tour, starting from the main transformer outside the camp and the main distribution on the SS side and all the barracks explaining how we are trying to do the job with the small resources to our disposition. He was very attentive, must have been an electrician because he knew what I was saying and his suggestions were very professional. It appeared to me that he was pleased with my handling of the job. He made a list of the material I asked for, promising to get it for me. I saw him twice after that. He told me he had difficulty to get the material, but he will keep trying, asking me to do the best I can. So I did, never got anything I asked. In the meantime we were preparing for the escape. I secretly was working to make a compass and succeeded, so we had to wait for the weather and the right opportunity. The camp as usually was buzzing with rumors of moving and liquidation. We realized that we might be running out of time. We managed to have everything in the transformer shed and one late afternoon we got there pretending we had to add some oil in the transformers. Tad was keeping watch outside and we were inside waiting for the dark. How could I describe the nerve wrecking to have to wait. If a guard would come in, we would have only one choice to kill him with the knives we had and then run, that was our plan, but we probably would not survive that kind of the outcome.

Finally it was dark, we were ready to go when Tad came in from the outside, very grim saying we can't go, that the SS men are all over we have to bury everything and get back to camp, what we did. I never found out whether Tad got cold feet in the last minute or he really did see the guards. We covered up everything in a hurry and left one by one for the camp without trouble. I had a deep suspicion of Tad's story. This hesitation could cost us lives right there without any accomplishment. That evening we did not talk very much. Tad tried to explain that he saw the guards all around, but we did not see any. So we had mixed feelings, did not sleep much that night. Next morning in the shop and in the camp was some kind of tension, whispers and quiet like before the storm. The SS from time to time brought in some small groups of Jews from other towns or were taking out some and this time I had an order to deliver one electrician. That was for me a dreadful task. I believed in destiny, fate, so I turned to my men and asked for a volunteer, trying to explain that I don't know where this man will go, but the situation and the rumors circulating in the camp are promising nothing good and I myself would go if I could, but I was told that I cannot go. I asked again for a volunteer, silence again. Then I turned to one man who came not long time ago with one of small groups. He jumped at me with accusation of sending him to a sure death. I only replied that he was an idiot, that nobody knows where we will be staying or going and if I could I would be the first to go. As we were arguing one man came forward volunteering to go, that he did not have anyone in the camp and would like to take a chance to leave. It was a great relief for me, we shook hands wishing each other good luck and he left for the assembly with other men to go to the unknown destination.

(After the liberation this man recognized me in Stuttgart on the street he thanked me for saving his life, he survived trusting his fate and destiny, in one second when he said I will go and that saved him.) I was glad it was over, that I did not have to tell someone that he had to go. The situation in the camp was deteriorating by the hour, more SS men and Ukrainian guards arrived, we knew that something was going to happen. Our escape plans were abandoned for the time being but we had plenty of worries if somebody will find our hidden food,

knives, compass, tools in the transformer shed we will be goners. But our worries were replaced by the new events. Next day at the general morning assemble we were surrounded by a heavy armed SS guards, every body was out but not the poles, even the sick one from the hospital, all the nurses and doctors. We knew again that something drastic will happen. After the Jewish police Lagerfuhrer gave the report to the SS man who was in charge and a new one, the first trucks started to arrive and they started to load the people. In the first truck they put the Jewish police Lagerfuhrer saying that he will supervise the action where ever they are going, he did not like but they pushed him in. The SS men pushed us to a tight closed group. We were probably 1500 people or more. With the pushing and squeezing I was separated from my group, people began to panick and I was wondering when the SS men will start shooting. The man whom I wanted to send out the other day saw me and came with tears to help him, I told him that I was in no position to help anybody, nobody knows what it is all about, I cannot help myself, that I tried to send him out yesterday, but now is too late. He pushed himself inside the mass of the people, but as usually I was in the front line, probably that was my fate because somebody grabbed me by the arm saing "come with me". I turned around, it was SS Sharfuhrer electrical inspector whom only few weeks ago I was briefing on the electrical wiring in the camp, he must have been my guardian angel, appearently he was looking for me and would not let my arm go. As other men were hollering in this turmoil "please take take me", he was hasitating, I was looking for my men, but they were not around me so I managed to say "please my electricians". Again a stroke of good luck for some, he thought that the men behind me were my men, so he grabbed 3 men and not leting my arm go, he escorted us far away from the other people to the front of one of the barracks where SS men were guarding us and a small group of others. We still did not know what this was all about or which group was better or safer to be. The electrical SS Sharfuhrer told me to stay where we were and we will be safe. I had to believe him, then he disappeared. In the center of the assemble square the SS men were keeping the people tight squeezed together. The trucks were coming and loading up to the capacity, leaving and coming back after $\frac{1}{2}$ hr. empty. It was a beatiful day in February but very mild like spring our group was with our backs against the barrack looking to the South,

before our eyes outside the camp were the hills covered with woods and pasture land, in distance were the beautiful Tatra mountains covered with snow shining in the sunshine. Our safe group grew to 115 men not even one woman. As we were standing we were looking at the misery of the group before us pushed, squeezed, mistreated by the guards, in the contrast to the beauty of the nature far away. Then we were awoken to the cruel reality, we heard the sounds of the machine guns from the woods in the hills, we tried to ask the guards but they got angry turning the guns against us, and forbidding to talk. The machine guns fire from the bursts switched to the continuous and as the trucks came back to the camp the gun fire stopped again. When the trucks left 10 min. later the machine gun fire started again, and we could hear that it was coming from the woods. We began to realize that people were taken to the woods and gunned down. People in the group, sending the prayers to the skies, but nobody seemed to listen. Some people were prepared for such ending and were committing suicide by taking some pills and dying in convulsions. As we could not talk to each other everybody was wrapped in his own thoughts. How many times, after all our loved ones were sent to the unknown destination, we heard about mistreatment, cruelty and death, but we did not want to believe, always were hopeful to see them again. But now hearing the machine guns sound coming from the woods I lost all the illusions and what a horrible way to die. As the day was progressing the group was smaller and smaller until nobody was left and no more machine guns sounds. I lost all my men in this massacre, the men who were working hard to fulfill the demands, believing that this will save them, but it did not. I myself was alive by a miracle. As the darkness settled down the skies lit up with huge fire, illuminating the whole area, they were burning the bodies. There were flames and the ashes in

the air of almost 1400 men and women. I was wondering who was better of them or we. They were finally free, nobody can harm them any more even the mighty German SS and their supreme race. But we were still in their grips, for a time being our lives were spared but still on their mercy and when ever they will decide they will shoot us and burn our bodies. I was watching the fire burning and wondering whether the good Lord is receiving the souls of the martyrs in Heaven?.

I spent the night watching the fire not knowing why did it all happened I was num and completely drained by witnessing the happenings of yesterday. As the morning came and the sun rose I was wondering how such a cruelty can happen on such a beautiful day. The fire and smoke was raging the whole day obscuring the sun. The day before, during the commotion I was separated from my men, the SS men by separating one group from the other achieved mix up and confusion exactly what they wanted. I lost contact with Tad and Soul. Later I learned that Tad somehow got to a small group which was designated two days before to be sent somewhere else. Soul shared the fate with the rest. The 3 men who were pulled out together with me came to thank me, they realized that the electricians were supposed to be taken out but in the commotion they were in the right place at the right time. I told them that it was their destiny and lucky minute to survive, they have to thank the God. As for myself I was wondering what kind of hand was guiding me through all those calamities. The fire died out, the light rain came down and finally the skies were crying, some men were quietly reciting the Kadish.

After few days we were again gathering on the assembly square, but this time together with the poles. We were about 115 men, poles 800. We did not know our future or destination we were marching to the Szebna Rail Road Station. The Polish girls were waving to us as they were passing by, I saw Kasia and Jesia, the girls of the inspiration in Szebna. That was the last time I saw them, I never saw them again.

We arrived at the station after the poles, we were loaded in the cattle car separately from the poles, for the unknown destination. We were only 115 men in the car, it was not too bad, nobody was in the mood to talk, everybody was completely drained mentally and physically from the horrors of the few days before. I gathered some straw in the corner of the car and as the train started to move, I fell asleep to the monotonous clanking of the wheels. I woke up it was morning, looked through the window covered with the barbed wire and recognized right the way that we were in my city of Krakow, which I left in 1940. Everybody took turn to look, I was only one from the city, question was where were we going?. The train slowed down and by noon we were in Krakow Plaszow, where we were unloaded and marched the poles ahead, to the Krakow Plaszow concentration camp.

The camp was located on the Jewish cemetery, I knew this area very well before the war, but now all the grave stones were removed and were used on the SS side as a sidewalk pavement. One building that was left standing used to be a huge morgue and a prayer house which was a piece of architecture with a big dome, and now was turned into a bakery for the camp. We moved in through the gate guarded by SS, Polish and Jewish police inside the camp. We found ourselves in the concentration camp city where we were told there were almost 30,000 Jewish inmates, it was quite impressive but I wished I was not here. We were separated from the Poles, we waved goodbye, their barracks were on the camp grounds but separated from the Jews by barbed wire, so we should not have any contact. The four of us were escorted by Jewish police man to the electrical department, handed over to the man in charge. To my surprise I recognized him, I knew him very well for many years. He was about 10 years older than I was, he served his apprenticeship in my father's electrical establishment, so he knew me and my family very well. The electrical shop he was in charge of was very large one, about 100 electricians. He was glad to see me, took me to his office and began to ask me how I managed to survive, and what happened to my father and the family. In short I described to him everything from the departure from Krakow to the massacre in Szebna and my miracle rescue by the SS Sharfuhrer electrical inspector who came few weeks before Szebna liquidation and I being in charge was briefing him on the electrical situation in the camp, and next I saw him during the liquidation, that is when he pulled me and 3 other men and saved us from being shot. I jokingly told him that I brought with me 3 best electricians, he said that he knew what I meant, because he had 100 men and maybe only $\frac{1}{2}$ were electricians, so there is room for 3 more, we all try to survive. I was glad to hear that this was his attitude. Willy, that was his name, was a very good man. He told me to get to know the men in the shop and take it easy. As I was mingling with men in the shop there were many questions to answer, where we came from, what conditions were there, did I know some names of their relatives, did I see or knew some of them?. As we were talking the door opened, all men sprang up to attention, it was the Sharfuhrer. It was second surprise of the day for me, it was the same inspector, the same man who pulled me and 3 other men in Szebna.

He went straight to the office next to Willys. I asked the man who he was, they told me that he is SS electrical boss and Willy is getting along very well with him. I could not wait to get to Willys office to tell him that his boss is the man who saved me, so I went into his office and told him that I would like to thank the Sharfuhrer. Willy knocked at the door, we walked in, Willy said that I would like to tell him something. He looked at me, I knew he recognized me, I only said "Sir, I would like to thank you for pulling me and other men out in Szebna". We looked in each other eyes, he said something like dont mantion, and Willy and I went out. Willy said again that he is a very good man. I understood that those two men have some kind of dealings. I was assigned to sleeping quarters, some guys were very helpful and we quickly became friends, especially Kuba, Benek Friedman, Oskar Russ, Vitek Goot and few others whose names I do not remember. I got an upper bunk in the barrack where most electricians were sleeping. A large barrack with about 500 men, few faucets of cold running water and only few toilet holes did not promise sanitary or hygienic condition, I could not see how anybody could keep himself reasonably clean. As I was saying, the camp was located on Jewish cemetery, cleared from the grave stones, there was a huge assembly square, on the sides were the sleeping barracks, women barracks, separate behind the barbed wires, even the children barrack, and polish inmates barracks. Farther out were all kind of shops; up on the hill over the square was electrical, carpenter, mechanical, tailor, shoemaker, laundry, womens seamstress, the bakery all kind of shops and barracks. Warehouses loaded with everything left behind by the departed Jewish people for the unknown destination. As in Rzeszow all the goods from the warehouses were repaired, restored and delivered to the Germans for their use. It was February 1944, though Krakow was farther from the mountains than Szebna but it was colder. We still retained our own clothing, I was quite well dressed, and after cleaning up after the transport I looked quite good and warm. With high leather boots and navy blue jacket I did not look like a concentration camp inmate. While looking around the camp I met my cousin Zygmunt Hillman, who was working in the carpenter shop next to the electrical shop, so we saw each other quite often, sharing the past experiences. He told me that grand-mother Hanna passed away in Ghetto (luckily) what I knew,

that his father Leopold and his mother Frania were deported during the Ghetto liquidation to unknown destination, by now we knew what it meant. He also told me that uncle Ignac the husband of aunt Lola is in the camp in the tailor shop, so I went to see him. He was a broken man with heart condition and the horror he went through losing his wife Lola, my aunt, and three children; Hela, Zosia and Szymek. So we cried on each other's shoulder, I was glad he was among his old friends tailors who were like a family helping each other. Because I did not think that he will last long I tried to see him as often as I could. I was looking for my old friends, after all I was in my home city, born and went to schools, learned the trade, worked and served in the army. Unfortunately I could not find too many, one of my school mates was a Jewish policeman. He told me his story, that he joined the police hoping it will help him to save his mother and a younger brother, but he failed and now he is stuck with the police, which did not have the best reputation among the people. I got better luck with the girls. I met my girlfriend with whom I spent a lot of time in 1936 and 37 before I went to the army. Regina was quite a girl. We fell in each other's arms happy to be alive, but sure telling about our tragic experiences of past few years which were very similar. She also lost her boyfriend whom she loved very much, but she was the one who believed that "life goes on". We were reminiscing about the many days and nights we spent together. She was 5,3" but in high hills looked much taller, very tastefully dressed, excellent dancer, swimmer, we spent many nights in the night clubs and many hot days on the river in my kayak. She had two married sisters who shared with us enjoyment of dancing and night clubs. Her sister's husband who was the distributor of the foreign films to the movie houses had free movie passes, so there was no film that we did not see. We all had a wonderful time, but as my time came to join the army, which was two year service in 1937, I realized that I owe Regina either commitment or explanation. I never made any promises, we were the best friends having a wonderful time, but we were not lovers, so we parted with understanding that if after my service we will be free and have a serious intentions toward each other we could start all over again. I thought that we made very logic decision. We parted as best friends.

I saw Regina briefly in 1939 after getting out of the army, but with the war going on we did not think about our relationship. As we were reminiscing about our old friendship Regina was very tactful and sweet girl, but I knew that she would not mind to start where we left many years ago regardless of circumstances we were. But I could not, and did not want to forget Jenny. So we were again good old friends, I promised to see her when ever possible. The life in camp was going on, our rations were very meager, soup once a day and half of a loaf of bread once a week, what was enough for a slow starvation. But pretty soon it was evident to me that in this camp not everybody was starving, it was a black market in the camp and people with a lot of money. But what bothered me most that the Jewish administration was getting much more in rations than they were distributing, like margarine or jam, or bread, beans which were in the soup, all those things were on the black market for those people who had money. It was hard to believe that in the circumstances that we were living, the greed was taking over to get rich without knowing whether one will be alive tomorrow. One example was a young man from our group, Vitek Good, I did not know where he came from and I did not care but he happened to sleep next to me. So I saw him after work sitting on the bunk bed and open what I called his restaurant, he had plenty of bread, real butter, kielbasa, cheese and he really was enjoying himself. I was wondering how someone can be like that. It was true that everyone tried to survive on his own, but most of the people were sharing with friends, but not Vitek he was an example of selfishness, for what I disliked him.

Then in the shop I had to start to do something, I was glad that I was not in charge any more, and would rather receive the orders from someone else. But that did not last long. Willy called me in and told me to take 6 men that I liked and set the electric poles in the corners of the assembly square, and install some flood lights. I did not even try to talk myself out from the supervising job because I knew Willy's predicament having $\frac{1}{2}$ of the men none electricians. We the professional had to be in charge to guide the ones with out any knowledge of electricity. So I got my 6 men with whom I struck good relationship; Kuba from Przemyśl, Benek from Krakow and Vitek who was also from Przemyśl and being only 16, Kuba asked me to include him in our group.

Though he knew I did not like him, but Kuba had a sentiment for Vitek's family he knew them in Przemyśl, so he felt some responsibility for him. Kuba shared my opinion of Vitek, that he was very unpleasant boy, so for Kuba's sake Vitek was with us plus 3 other men. We got our tools and were heading to the assembly square where the poles were lying on the ground. We had to dig the holes and set them up. As the men started to dig, they called me that they struck something. We realized that we were digging out the graves and coffins, we were on cemetery and probably buried bodies were under us. They asked what to do?. I told them to dig next to the coffin, we had to get down 4 feet, as they dug they hit the skeleton, so what do we do now?. I had a limit how far I could move the pole in any direction and wherever we tried we hit the corpses. We had to disturb even the dead one in the graves. I decided to dig out one coffin remove it and put it on the top of the next one. For sure it was not a job of the electricians but we had to do it, begging the dead for forgiveness. Then we put the pole in the empty hole, doing the same with the rest of them. After we came back I reported to Willy what we faced there, that we had to remove the coffins to accommodate the poles. He shrugged his shoulders saying that we did the right thing, if we don't care about the living so let's not worry about the dead one, in a way he was right. Again I got stuck with my group, with Kuba and Benek, we developed the relationship that whatever we had we shared but not with Vitek. Kuba told me that Vitek's family was very wealthy and they left money with the poles, so Vitek was getting money from outside, but he would not share with anybody, I did not care as long as he did what he was told to do. Willy was good to me, he slipped from time to time a loaf of bread which helped. Most men in our group were old masters in wheeling and dealing so they did not need the soup they were getting, I asked my cousin Zyga to come to us for the soup, what he did, and by fishing down to the bottom one could find even few beans. The chief of Jewish Police and Jewish Lagerfuhrer was the same man by the name Hilowicz, I knew him from before the war by seeing him in certain places. He was about Willis' age they knew each other very well. Hilowicz was kind of shady character before the war, his camp police did not have good reputation either. The Jewish police in camp had quite a power and this power got to their heads,

so some of them instead of shielding the people were abusing them worse than Germans. Hilowicz and his wife, who was slightly above 5 feet tall and was in charge of the women barracks, were ~~CARRYING~~ whips and did not hesitate to use them whenever they felt like. That little bitch was coming in the barracks early in the morning to chase the women out to the assembly square flexing the whip and calling them "you lazy venecian prostitutes", get out and do something useful. She was a disgrace to the Jewish race, but the condition we lived under would bring the best and the worst out of the people. So she and her husband were the bottom of the Jewish society. There were long senseless hours of the inspection every morning and every evening by the SS and Jewish police. I was not a smoker but sometimes staying in one place for so long one felt to have something in the mouth. It was not permitted to smoke during the inspection, but one time I was smoking and was spotted by Jewish policeman, he took my name and I had to report to the Jewish police after the inspection. So I did and was told that I smoked which was against the regulation. I tried to explain that nobody saw me I ment the Germans, but I committed an other crime that the Jewish policeman saw me and he is not nobody. I had to be punished by spending one night in confinement, which was dark tiny 2'x2' cell. When the door was shot I was squeezed in upright position not to be able to lift the arm to scratch the face or whipe the nose. I could take that, but the danger was that sonetimes the SS men were looking for fun, thy were coming at night take out somebody they wanted and just for fun shooting him. The Jewish police knew it yet they were putting people like myself in this danger. But I survived, little bit stiff and blinded by the light. I joined the morning inspection, back in the shop Willy gave me hell for not letting him know because he would get me out, since he knew the police, that I could have get killed. I thanked him for his concern, glad to be still alive. That was the daily routine of the camp life. I was seeing Regina, she asked me to wait for her when the women were coming back from work what the husbands were doing and the sweethearts. I did not have either so I thought I owe her that for the sake of our old friendship, some moral support, if that was what she needed to lift her spirits.

I tried to be on time when they were coming from work, and after the inspection went to her barrack to visit her what was permitted to stay till 8:00 o'clock. After this time the SS men were coming in and lifting the blankets looking for men. To be caught was meant to receive a lot of beating in the best case. I was surprised to see women's barracks so nice and clean with a woman's touch. They were much better organized or had more opportunity by working in the laundry and storage barracks where the sheets and pillowcases were stored. Regina had a white sheet and white pillow on her bunk bed, something I did not see for a long time. Coming in the first time I felt like a celebrity, because I knew quite a few girls who were girl friends of my bodies before the war. We were going skating, skiing, tennis playing, swimming, boating and endless dancing parties. Since almost nobody was left from the old gang, I was like a prizeless relic of the beautiful past which we were sharing one time. It was nice to see so many girls survivors, but was sad to see so few men survived. One time we had to go outside to do the wiring in a new barrack, the SS man came in and asked for the electrician in charge. The boys called me, I asked what I can do for him, with an authoritative voice he demanded to get him an electric heating plate. I knew right the way that he was an SOB, but he had the gun and I had a star of David. I tried to explain that I did not have any here but tomorrow when we will be back I will try to get him one. But he wanted one right the way and struck me in my face. I was thinking that in some other circumstances I would take him apart together with his gun, but I only shrugged my shoulders, so he said "damn it just try to come tomorrow with out it" and walked away. I was thinking that will be the day I will get him the plate. The boys asked me whether I was hurt, but it was only my pride that was hurt. Looking back through the years I was very lucky, I saw many people severely beaten and abused but it was my only third hit. I recall one in 1939 in our apartment, second by Sturmabfuhrer Mak with his whip over my head, and that was my third time, I thought it was not a bad record, but how about the pride? Jews were not supposed to have any. Back in the shop I told Willy what happened, he took me to SS Sharfuhrer complaining that we are being harassed on the job (I thought what a nerve, but it proved that there was some special relationship between Willy and the Sharfuhrer).

After telling what happened, Sharfuhrer said in German those pig dogs, and told Willy not to send anybody there, let them stay in the barracks without the light. I was surprised with outcome, that was the end, we never went there any more. It was an advantage for Willy to have this SS boss so close to him and who was willing to take the responsibility for the situation, like not to send people on the job for the SS. In general I worried about Willy and his chummy relation with his SS Sharfuhrer. I spoke to him about when I got the chance, I told him about Roze in Szebna and my father's friendship with Captain Kiefer. He told me that he understood what I said, thanked me for my concern for him, and promised to be careful. I felt better that I warned him. The long morning inspections were getting routine. The one inspection some time in April very much imprinted in my memory. We were staying without any purpose, men around the square, women on the right and the SS men with their guns around us, Jewish police keeping orders inside. We heard the army trucks rolling on the road above the assembly square, we heard women screaming and crying "children, children". We realized that trucks were loaded with children. As we were assembled the SS men emptied out the children's barrack, loaded them on the trucks which we saw rolling away. Nobody ever could describe the cries and suffering of those women and men whose children were taken away. We could hear the cries of the children from the trucks. We the one who did not have any more anybody to lose were just numb and speechless. I just was wondering how many more tragedies I will witness. The children were sent to Auschwitz to better conditions according to the Germans, only nobody ever heard of them again. Regina's older sister had 8 year old boy who was also taken away. I rushed to their barrack knowing very well what they are going through but could not do anything only offer my shoulder to cry on. We were wondering how many blows human can take until it caves in. I realized that we actually were immunized to the horror we were witnessing. While working on the electric fence which was surrounding our camp one man from the electrical group jumped on the wires and was electrocuted, by the time we were able to turn off the power he was dead. Apparently he had enough, but for us was not a big thing it was almost a daily occurrence. Behind the carpenter shop was a gully and a small ravine where we witnessed quite often the SS men shooting

the men whom they caught outside the camp. But mostly they would bring by the truck load the Polish partisan, shoot them then douse them with gasoline and burn. The Poles were dying to the song on their lips that Poland will not perish as long as it has the brave men willing to die for it. I regretted that Polish antisemites did not see that Germans were exterminating not only Jews, but the Poles were the next one. An memorable event happened May 1st. 1944. Maybe the Germans knew how badly the war was going for them, so they tried to show their might to the Jews. On the morning inspection they brought out a big table, put it in the center of the square, covered it with linen, brought some sandwiches, wiski and some other drinks, we were joking that Lagerfuhrer was going to give us a party, but soon we stopped, the joke was on us. We were ordered to take off our clothes to the bare skin, nothing left on. Thank God it was May only with snow flurries in the air, I was wondering how many will come down with pneumonia. We were hoping that they will make the inspection quickly, we did not know what they were looking for, but it did not matter. To our surprise the dignitaries were not even out and we were staying naked almost in a freezing temperature. Maybe after 2 hrs. the SS nobility began to arrive in their shining Mercedeses, Sturmabfuhrer Get, high ranking Gestapo officials stepping out of their cars dressed in furcoats ankle long, greeting each other, exchanging the laughs and reaching for the sandwiches and drinks to keep warm, and almost not paying any attention to the mass of 30,000 men and women without any cloths, the party was going on and on for hours till the afternoon. Then either they got bored or cold in their furcoats they began to leave, without any inspection. They allowed us to get dressed, numb and shivering from cold we got dressed and went to our barracks or shops. I went to the shop where we had a stove, we all were ready to burn it down to warm up. What a cruel and senseless spectacle staged by the superior race, nation that professed to rule the world! Summer was coming, we knew that the Russian army was pressing hard but their stop at Warsaw on the other side of the river allowing the Germans to crush the Polish uprising did not give us much hope. The Germans were talking about new weapons they soon will be using

and it should change their luck around. We did not know whether the Russians ran out of steam, our hopes were more with the west than with the east, yet we were afraid whether it will not be too late for us no matter which side will be first. I was coming to Regina quite often just for the moral support for her and a grief stricken sister of her. Nobody believed that they ever were going to see those children again. I did not forget Jenny or my parents, but everything I have seen after their departure did not give me much hope of their survival. Again like in Szebna the rumors began to circulate in the camp about the liquidation. From the past experience I knew that should it come to liquidation we will not need 100 electricians. I lost all my men in Szebna, only I survived. Then Willy came out with a list of 50 men I among them to report directly to the assembly square, that we will be sent to Germany to the industrial complexes as electricians to fill the shortage of skilled labor. I asked Willy what was all about, he could not tell me much, all he told me just go and you will be alright. It was a commotion, they gave us very little time, so I was not able to see my cousin Zyga or uncle Ignaz or Regina. I only sent a word with men who stayed behind. We were all 50 on the assembly square Kuba, Benek, Vitek and others who were working with me the last few months were here too. We were surrounded by Jewish Police, then other surprise! The police wheeled in the wagon with striped prisoner uniforms, we had to undress, put the uniforms on and leave our clothes behind. The uniforms were blue and white striped, concentration camp prisoners uniforms. So we lost the last identity of our past life. I was trying to keep my leather boots but they were replaced with wooden clogs. What a horror, we did not have mirrors but looking at each other we had an idea how we looked, now I was fullpledged "Kazetnic". As we were waiting, Regina came running, first they did not let her close but she knew one of the policemen he let her come to me, she brought me a better pair of wooden clogs and a pair of socks. You had to be there to see to understand the difference between the clogs and a deluxe clogs which Regina brought for me. I was thankful to her for the clogs. Regina was surrounded by everybody and was taking the messages to friends and families who were left behind. It was our time to march to the railroad station.

I hugged Regina for the last time, asking her to try to survive, she only said that "I will make it." It reminded me that somebody else did say the same words long ago. As we marched we waved the last good by not knowing whether we will ever meet again. At the railroad station we were back to the cattle car with little straw in it and a bucket for the natural needs, we were squeezed together on the way to the land of Victors, to help in the war effort. What an irony! After 3 days and nights we found ourselves somewhere in the mountains area, we were unloaded and saw the sign Natzweiler, which did not mean anything to us. We were loaded on the trucks and were driven up, up, because of clouds and fog we could not tell where we were. We were given only watery soup and slice of bread on the train, we were starved and weak, we got again some soup and bread and left outside where we slept along the road clinging to each other for warm. We woke up to the misty, foggy morning, we all felt very weak. Looking at other prisoners walking around looking like zombies and I myself having difficulty breathing it dawned on me that we must be very high in the mountains, so the word spread around that we are not having the heart attacks, that it is the air. We heard from the old inmates, that we were in Natzweiler Concentration camp high in the Alps, that work here is only in the quarry, that nobody last here too long. I could understand because being here only one day with our malnutrition we were already moving like lunatics without doing any work. Lucky for us, the next day we were loaded again on the trucks, taken to railroad station to the new destination. After another day and night we were unloaded in town of Neckarelz. We were marching in our wooden clogs to the center of the town to the curious staring of the German population and the children, whom the adults were trying to protect from the new criminals. We arrived to the school which was converted to a prison camp. As a group of tradesmen and specialists we were looked upon more favorably. The camp consisted of all nationalities mostly Russians, Poles, French, Yugoslavs and us. The classrooms were converted into bedrooms with triple high bunk beds. Each bunk bed had mattress, pillow and a blanket. In Plaszow we slept on our boots and cloths in order to protect it from being stolen. Here we were told to put our numbers on our clogs and leave them on the floor.

stealing was severely punished ,which was good.Our rations were one third of a small loaf of bread,slice of margarine ,and a good size ladle of soup, which depended on the Russian cook, who could give the water from the top or the heavy stuff from the bottom.The first day we received our utensils, and considering the circumstances we were treated good.

The next day we were up 5 o'clock,we had to try to wash up using the few faucets of cold water.Luckily some guys did not wash,otherwise it would have been impossible to get to the water.We were served the black water called coffee,but it was hot and it was good. After that there was inspection in the school yard,we marched in columns of four under the guard of SS men. As I glanced at the column we looked like a group of condemned men. The one who were here longer were in much worse shape than we were.

They were in rags,dragging themselves through the darknes of the early morning.We did not get chance night before to ask the guys where was the working place,so we did not know where we were and where we are going. After a while we arrived at our destination.It was a huge clearing at the bottom of a big hill ,there were transformers and overhead power lines leading to the inside of the mountain.We parted with the rest of the Group.We the electricians were led inside tunnel which was 30 feet high, and 50 feet or more wide, so the train could go in.What was it ,we had no idea,the farther we went in,the more we saw.A very modern metal shaping machinery ,we realized that we were deep in the mountain factory. We came to a large room in the tunnel where some German civilians were waiting for us with some papers in their hands.

I realized that they had some information about all of us.I was almost sure that Willi and the SS Sharfuhrer sent the list with the specification about each of us.As we had no names but only numbers the German called the number and he knew what kind of work anyone was able to perform. He must have marked the leaders on his list,because those were the men he called and told them to choose their own group of 5 or 6 .after which the German civilians led the groups away. When it came to my number Kuba, Benek, Vitek,and my other men were right behind me sticking to me like a glue.I did not know why. As I stepped out the German looking at the list said;"You are the line man'" I said yes,"wait here" he said.So i was in charge again.When he came back he gave me my assignment,telling me

that the American planes are coming from time to time bombing out the outside so our job will be to restore the lines as soon as possible. He took us to the storage room where was everything the electrician would need or want. He told me to equip myself and my men with whatever tools and the material we will need, but he repeated again that the job will have to be done as soon as possible.

I got pole climbing hooks, safety belts, personal small tools for everybody and we gathered all the material that I could think of we would need in case of bombing attack. We had such good feeling and hopes by hearing that the Americans are bombing the German Fatherland. We had to hide our feelings because some guards were talking between themselves and referring to the Americans as a pig dogs who have the nerve to come here and destroy their country, but we were filled with joy.

But so far we did not see much destruction. I was thinking that in case of bombing and lines coming down I could count on Kuba to climb the poles with me, I taught him in Plaszow, as a last resort Benek was daring enough to try, the rest were as a support group. So for time being we were on standby. We learned that we were in an airplane engines factory, located in the mountain tunnels, protected from the air attacks. It was famous "Junkers Motoren Werke." I was thinking that we the hated, mistreated, destined to be killed are helping the Germans in a war effort.

What an irony, but did we have any choice if we wanted to survive? We knew that through the years working for Germans our help in war effort did not amount to too much. Labor camps, concentration camps, death camps were a big cover up for a large army of SS elite and Gestapo hiding behind the importance of protecting the Fatherland from enemies like Jews. And having such monumental responsibility they were exempt from the front, and the war they started. It was much easier to play heroes by killing the innocent Jews.

May be it was my own explanation and justification, right or wrong in my mind, what we were doing here. Although it was only September but the mornings were cold and we were shivering while marching to work. I got the idea about which I told Kuba and Benek to scout for the empty cement bags from which we could make vests to wear under our skimpy striped jackets. We found some but we were not sure whether we could have them, whether we will not be punished for using them. We had to take a risk. Soon we equipped ourselves with the bag vests which proved to be life savers in the coming months. These days were uneventful except going to the camp after work through the town, streets lined with the German adults and children, some Russians from the column showed something to the children, and parents encouraged the children to approach the prisoners and give them something like sandwich in exchange for the toys crudely made by the Russians. I found it interesting to see that the guards were looking the other way. As I was always thinking that the necessity is the mother of invention, I asked Kuba and Benek whether they saw what I did. By now we were sharing everything that we could organize extra besides our rations. I told them that we too could make the toys and exchange for the food. They said that maybe I can but they cannot. So I told them that tomorrow I am starting the toys production.

The next day was a nice sunny one, but we noticed some uneasiness in our guards outside the tunnel, who were looking at the sky. We thought they were bird watchers, but soon we had an explanation when the air raid sirens started to blast. We had such a wonderful feeling to see the Germans scramble in all directions. The guards were chasing everybody deep into the tunnel. I told the guard that we were the emergency crew, showed him the replacement material, so he let me stay pretty near the entrance of the tunnel. I could not describe the feeling to see the Hitler Empire being broken in pieces and flying

in the air. In that respect I was richly rewarded when with the whailing of the sirens came loud noise of machine guns fire, I saw the small fighters with the white star markers. They were small but with a big punch, they came very close to the tunnel, where bombs were falling and everything was flying in the air. The most joyous thing was to see the freight train staying outside the tunnel loaded with the beautiful airplane engines made in the tunnel factory with the help of our work to explode, and being destroyed by the American airplanes. That was most beautiful day and scenery. The last time destruction like this I saw when I was still in the Polish army as a motorcycle dispatcher in 1939. I witnessed the air attacks of the victorious German air force as their "Stuka" airplanes bombed the defenseless Polish villages. Now coming out of the tunnel and seeing the destruction we were almost ready to dance, but we had to pretend to be sad, for our grim looking SS guards.

We had quickly to get our tools and necessary material, and evaluate the damage. Some wires were down, some transformers were damaged, but the transformers were the responsibility of the German electricians. Before we started to work we had to make sure that no power was in the lines, which I did. Then Kuba and I got in to our climbing gear with safety belts and ropes hanging from our waists to be able to pull up whatever we will need. We were in a tough situation because the climbing pole hooks were designed for shoes but we were wearing the wood clogs, yet somehow we managed to tie them to our legs and climb up. What a beautiful view I had from the top of the pole I was standing on. The whole train loaded with the plane engines was destroyed, the locomotive was still burning and steaming. It was clear to me that the train was the objective of the attack, otherwise we would have much more damage. We had to pull up the wires, splice the broken one, climb from one pole to the other, secure them on the insulators and with tackle and pulley to bring them to proper tension, which I did. When I was on the pole I could see high in the sky a light spotter plane, I was sure it was an American, taking pictures of the damage. I was sure that it was my first time, but not the last one on the line.

We were done with our part of work before it was time to go back to camp.

The Russian group was working filling the craters done by bombs and repairing the damage done to the Railroad tracks. The Germans were moving in the heavy equipment apparently to clean the tracks from the bombed out train. For me it was a very happy day.

In the rubble outside I was looking for a piece of wood suitable for my toy making project. I found some hoping it will do. As we were the only electrician group working outside we were facing the danger of being killed by the American gun fire. We worked out the procedure; with the sound of the sirens every one should run to the tunnel. Likely Kuba and I could get caught on the top of the pole, normally coming down was very slow, so I advised Kuba to lift the hooks from the pole and slide down on the belly against the pole, then get out the feet from the clogs and run barefoot to the tunnel, but if it will be too late to reach the tunnel then drop to the ground instantly. I learned this procedure in the army as the best way to survive when the bullets begin to fly. Talking to some other men from our group we learned that they were assigned to different jobs in the tunnel.

I started to work on my first toy, which supposed to be racing car. I already was visualizing the way to supplement our meager rations. The next day was a quiet one, I was able to carve my car. As I was almost finished I had to find a tree branch which had to be round so that I could cut it and make the wheels. We found one, the wheels were made, I put the pencil decals and car was ready to be sold. As we marched to the camp through the main street I displayed my car, and a boy ran to me, I gave him the car and he handed me a nice chunk of bread, that was my first success in toy making business for survival. I shared the bread with Kuba and Benek, and was thinking how we could get more food.

I had in my mind the Russian cook who was giving out the soup, and who could make the difference depending how he ladled it out, from the top or from the bottom. He surely was well fed and with the cigarette in his mouth all the time. I told Kuba and Benek that we have to get this guy to give us soup from the bottom, but how to ask him. I told my plan; I will carve an ashtray and show it to him, that we are doing it especially for him and if he will start to give us the soup from the bottom I will carve the man with a soup ladle to look like him and put it on the side of the ashtray.

We were laughing from the survival plot. Can I do it, they asked, I can try was my answer. So the next day I was at work on my next project, but I was interrupted by the air sirens. The Americans were coming again, we were at the entrance of the tunnel ready for the repair action after the raid. But to my surprise and disappointment nothing happened on the outside. We heard the loud explosions and ground was shaking but did not know where it was coming from. Soon after the raid a truck with SS guards came to the tunnel entrance telling us to come out, to take our tools and material and rush to the side where the Americans dropped the bombs. I thought so I will not miss the fun after all. As we arrived to the other side of the mountain there was an other entrance to the tunnel, or the exit from where the trains were coming out loaded with the crates of airplane engines. That exit was the objective of the air raid. This time it was very successful one, the whole entrance to the tunnel was caved in, crates were all over the rail road tracks, rail cars were standing up vertically, power lines were down. As our hearts were full of joy, we had to rush to restore the power lines. The SS guards were all around the perimeter. Since the whole factory was under the jurisdiction of the air force, so we were not surprised to see a truck with few German air force men with some instruments mingling around with the group of Russians with shovels waiting for some instruction. The electrical transformer was near by the electrical lines I had to start to restore. As I was readying myself to climb the pole the air force men with some instruments were marking out something with the sticks next to the pole I had to climb. I asked the Russians what was all about, one said that it was an unexploded bomb, they are going to dig it out. I did not know what to say or do, it was not a joyous prospect to have the bomb being dug up next to the pole that I will be on the top. And what if it was time delayed one. I did not have much time to think, but to get on the pole and get the wires on the insulators. I told my men to stay as far as possible and come near only when I will need something to pull up. I climbed to the top of the pole working as fast as I could in order to get out of the place as fast as possible. Looking down at the men digging I was wondering whether we will make it. After I finished I slid down in a hurry. Kuba was on the other pole

about 200 feet away not realizing what was going on. So we moved away, taking care of the broken lines and staying as far as we could from the bomb. Luckily the bomb was disarmed without any accident, but it was an other experience. In the camp we learned that the Russians who were digging the bombs formed a special group, getting double rations and other privileges working only when unexploded bomb had to be dug out. But the bad thing was that in the past while digging the bomb exploded and men were brought to camp in pieces. So my fears were well founded while working over the bomb and not getting double rations.

Coming back to reality I was carving the ashtray and was working on an airplane hoping to supplement our rations. Many nights on the bunk bed I was thinking about long lost family. After the Szebna massacre that I witnessed I lost hope that any of them will survive. I tried to free myself from those grim pessimistic visions, but they always were with me. Next days in the tunnel and outside was quiet, so we were assigned to laying electrical cables inside the tunnel. High on the ladders we were hammering in the granite walls hangers for the cables. As we were above the lights in the dark tunnel the guards could not see us and as long we were banging with our hammers it did appear that we were working. This job made possible for me to get strapped to the ladder and do my carving. So I finished the ashtray and the airplane and going back to the camp I was displaying discreetly my airplane with a turning propeller, and soon the young boy ran toward me with a nice piece of bread, so we were in business. In the evening I went to the cook and showed him the ashtray explaining that when it will be finished a carved statue of a cook will be on the side, he liked it. I told him that my bodies are helping me by covering for me so that I am able to carve. He understood what I meant and the next day our soups were from the bottom of the pale what was very helpful in our survival. There was a rumor that truck load of leather shoes was sent to the camp, we were hoping that our clogs will be replaced but that was only a dream which was soon forgotten. Almost every day the air raid sirens were whaling but not always there was an attack.

We realized that the skies belong to the American airplanes, and what a joy it was to see them fly high and low. Being on a high ground we could observe their tactics. Not a train could go in or out of the factory in the tunnel. In the valley as soon as any train started to move the plains were right there and stopped them. Some times we saw the passenger trains, in that case the plains would come down, train would stop, plains would make two passes over the train making possible for the people to run out then the plains would hit the locomotive leaving it on fire. What a beautiful sight it was for me.

Shortly after we were sent to nearby town "Neckar Gerrach" where they were assembling barracks for the air force personnel in charge of which was air force major "Bauliter". Our job was to string the powerlines. The weather was nice but getting cold and it was lucky for us that we were wearing the vests that we made ourselves from the cement bags, they were real life savers.

After a couple of days the major approached me asking how the job was progressing. He seemed to me to be a very decent man. I reported that every thing was all right, but it came to my mind the leather shoes so I told him that it is very difficult to climb the poles with the clogs and stay there, I showed him my I was wearing. He was very sympathetic, but said that they don't have any shoes, but I told him that they have in the camp, only they would not give them to us. He looked at me with disbelief and told me he will see what he can do about. I told Kuba and Benek, but did not believe that we will get any. After the day work we were heading to the camp as usually we were counted and inspected by SS. Lagerfuhrer. After the procedure he called all the electricians to step out. At first I thought it must be some bad news, but to our surprise he told us that he received a call to equip all the electricians with shoes to make possible for us to do the job we were assigned to.

We were looking at each other with disbelief. leather shoes to replace the wooden clogs for all electricians. Then it dawned on me what happened, the major I was talking to must have called the camp to give the shoes to six electricians who worked on the poles, but the Lagerfuhrer misunderstood and gave shoes to all 50 electricians, what a wonderful mixup.

So we all marched in to the basement where the shoes were and got even the right size leather shoes, I told Kuba and Benek not to tell any body how it all started. The rest of the electricians were wondering how it all happened, so I spread the word to keep quiet about, it was not advisable to know who was instrumental in all this. We marched out with new shoes on our feet to envious stares of others. One good thing came out from all this that the Lager administration could not hide any more that they have shoes and began to give out to everybody, so at the end everybody was happy. The next day the major asked me how were the shoes, I thank him for and assured him that the job will progress much faster now. Those were the paradoxes of the concentration camp life. Then a traumatic thing happened. A Russian escaped from the camp and was caught, so we all were assembled in the school yard, he was hanged in the outdoor toilet building as a lesson to all of us. That was a grim reminder to all, but the life had to go on. I finished the carving for the cook, it was really very good and the cook was happy, and our soups were from the bottom, and some time even a nice piece of bread. I also was making planes which were going like hot cakes. We finished the job for the air force and were sent to an other town of "Neckar Bischof Heim". All those names were starting with "Neckar" because it was a river by this name and those towns were on the river "Neckar". The SS brought us there by truck, Kuba, Benek, Vitek, 3 other men and me. There were may be 200 other prisoners, Russians, Polisch, French, Ukrainians, you name it. They were putting up complex of barracks, we did not know for what or whom. Two barracks were finished, and were occupied, we were supposed to live there too. The whole complex was on the hill in the woods. If not the barbed wire and the SS guard it was pretty nice. Our first job was to bring the electricity to the two barracks. The nearest power was $\frac{1}{2}$ mile down the hill at the rail road station. The road from the station to the barracks was lined up with fruit trees mostly plums. We were putting the temporary wires from tree to tree full of fruits. We did not see plums for years, so we were putting the wires and eating the plums. It was miracle that at the end of the day we did not die of diarrhea but we survived. We got the power in and lit up the barracks, to everybodys delight.

The next day was a bad one for us. The SS guards took us all to the rail road station to pick up the barrack sections and carry to the camp side. It was a back braking job. The day after the SS Lagerfurer asked me how we are doing, I told him that we are carrying the sections, and not working on the wiring. He angrily called the guard leader and told him not to bother us, that we have more important work to do than to carry the sections. As long as I saw him in such good mood I mention to him that the wiring would progress faster if I could get some more men to help us to dig the holes for the poles, and help to raise them up. He turned again to the guard and told him to give us 4 strong men, which he did. From then on the guard did not bothered us any more. In this camp again we had to build a good relationship with every body, especially with Capo who was also a prisoner but in charge of all of us inside the barracks, and sometimes his power was even greater than the SS guards outside the camp. Our Capo was a short French man, claiming to serve in French Foreign Legion in Marocco. I saw right the way that he can be sweet if he wanted to but most of the time he was mean and cruel. As our bunks were in the same room, I decided to win his good will. He called himself Herii, so when we lit up the barrack I turned to him by name Herii, and asked whether he would like to have a light and switch on his bunk, sometimes to be able to read in bed in the evening. I could see that I bought a friend, He said "Yes Yes Edie". I got Kuba, who put the light where he wanted, and from that time we were friends. The four men whom I got as diggers and the rest of my group together went to the road toward the station from where our power was coming. I marked out the distance between the poles, and the holes for them. The four men who were Russian started to dig. My men were stretching the wires along the road reading them for stretching on the poles. The Russians did a good job, by the end of the day we had all the holes dug and the poles next to it ready to be raised up. The Russian diggers asked me to request them in future when I will need help, what I promissed to do, they were good men to work with. Before we went to the barracks we picked some plums to give to others, we could not eat anymore, we learned our lesson.

Next day the Russians prepared pile of stones at every hole for filling in and bracing the poles. We were ready to put the poles in, with the Russians help one pole after the other went into the hole. I was standing on the end of the line visually seeing to it that they were in plumb, giving the signal to stamp the earth and stones in the hole. Again by the afternoon the poles were lined up, I looked from one end closing one eye and could tell we did a good job. The Russians still were stamping the ground when I was called to the SS Lagerfuhrer. He came to the side with a German civilian, telling me that he will be the electrical supervisor for this project and any thing I will need from supplies he will be the man to talk to. The Lagerfuhrer left and I was walking with Herr Meister, showing the line of poles we just put up. He looked and as we came to the end of the line he stopped and told that he will show me the best way to tell whether the poles were lined up properly, I said "Yes Sir". He pulled out of his vest a pocket watch on a chain an old style, he used the watch as a plumb and checked the poles how they were set. I asked him how they were, he said they were O.K. I realized that he was not a great electrician, if the most important was to him to show me how to set the poles to the plumb, with a watch he must have known that I dont have one, and my eye was just as good.

He did not ask where I was getting the power from, how heavy will be my load, and what size of wires I am using, those would be technical questions. So I knew he does not know any thing, but swastica in lapel indicated he was a party man. I showed him around informing him that tomorrow we will be mounting the insulators and stringing the wires, then liquidate the temporary line and have my men to start wiring the barracks. The Russians whom the Lagerfuhrer assigned to us will be utilized to put the poles when we need them.

He agreed with me on everything then said good by and left.

Next day we were working on the lines our leather boots were the life savers in climbing the poles. Our hopes for war ending soon were boosted from time to time. Because the camp was located on the top of the hill it was possible for us to see the rails far away in the valley. As soon as the trains appeared the American planes would come down bombing them out, the planes roamed the skies freely with out the challenge. After we got our main power line working we concentrated on wiring of the barracks.

This job was the same routine from barrack to barrack, so after I assigned my men, I did have to supervise only, that left me time to work on my toy planes. I hoped that we will be send back to Neckarelz, so I wanted to have my merchandise ready, because we missed our suppliment which the toys were providing us. The washing facilities in the camp were almost non existent, most of the inmates did not even try to wash themselves, it made little bit more possible for us to get to the two faucets. We found an old drum and received the permission to make fire under it and boil our shirts and underwear before it would walk away from us full of lice. The Capo Henrii was very friendly with us, I made my bussines to sit next to him in the evening and ask him about his Foreign Legion experience. He was drumming out all the stories which probably never happened, but he was delighted by the attention I gave him. Few days later our German supervisor came again asking how we were doing. I took him around to show what we did and he seemed to be satisfied. Then he started to ask me, like probing my knowledge of the electricity. I had feeling that he wanted to have some information, but did not want to tell that he does not know very much. He asked what size of the wire I would use for 5 HP. motor, the size of fuzes in Amps. So not trying to be a wise guy I told him. He took out the note book wrote down all the information and thanked me. As I gave him all the information which he appearantly needed, I was thinking may be I could ask him a favor. So I started, that when we were in Neckarelz I was able to exchange some toys that I am carving at night for some food, like bread, but here we have no contact with the civilian population, so may be he could take some toys and try to exchange. He listened and said that he is not sure whether he could do it, so I told him to try, and if he cannot exchange then he should give it away to the children. I told him that I had the toy plane in the barrack, may I bring and show to him? I brought the plane that was modeled like German fighter plane which he liked very much, but was hesitating to take it with out giving me anything, so I told him again to take it and to see if he could exchange for some thing, anything edible. He took the plane, put in his leather attache and left. He looked to me to be honest guy, I was hoping he will bring something next time.

In my group was one man who was not much of an electrician but a great talker. He was a Polish Jew but lived in France, he was older than I was, and told me how rich he was, and how much property he had in France, that after the war I will have to go with him and he assured me that we will not have to work anymore in our lives. I was listening and thinking of a Polish proverb "The dreams of a cut off head". And that was what it was, his name was Henri, short time after he got sick, running high fever, we got the permission to take him to Neckarelz camp hospital. As the trains were not running we had to improvise the stretcher and carry him to the camp, where we left him in a very dubious care. Few days later we had a word that Henri passed away as a victim of a Typhoid fever, so he took with him all the dreams. We were wiring the barracks and the other groups building more of them, and wondering for whom. We were getting more hungry and skinny, as the winter was upon us the cold and snow was our next enemy, our paper vests were the life savers but we wondered whether we will survive. Sometime at night I was going through all the events of the past years, the fate of family and Jenny. I did not have any illusion of their survival, I did not talk any more to Jenny or the family, the hope had vanished with the flames of Szebna massacre. What a chance of survival we had in the circumstances we were living? We the electricians were better off than the others but the sanitary conditions or the lack of it were the source of the Typhoid fever which was taking many lives who otherwise would survive. Henri went, who will be the next? As the frost and snow froze our running water I was going out early in the morning to wash myself with the snow, hoping to freeze the lice, not caring that I could die from pneumonia. The thought of survival was just as painful, what kind of life could it be without the ones who meant so much to me. Those things were haunting me in my dreams and were unforgettable during the days. Yet life went on, some times we believed that the war is almost over, when we heard the roar of American planes in the sky. One time we were watching an American fighter chasing German fighter over the tops of the trees till he got him to the ground exploding in a ball of fire. We heard the explosion of the bombs it was a sweet music to our ears, but the question was whether we will last long enough to see the end of the war. I was still making the toy planes hoping some-how to supplement our rations. One time Herr Meister came calling me behind the barrack, he handed me the whole loaf of bread.

Only the one who lived in concentration camp could comprehend what it meant to have a loaf of bread. He told me that people are very interested in my toys, because the German children don't have any these days. It did not make me feel bad, my heart did not bleed for German children, but making the toys was the way of our survival. I gave him an other plane hoping for an other loaf of bread. He asked me some other technical questions taking careful notations, even asking for some sketches, which I did in his notebook. He thanked and promised to be back in a few days. So I was again in production and Herr Meister was coming every week with a loaf of bread which helped a lot, but our malnutrition was visible more every day when we looked at each other or touched our ribs. Some-how we survived the worst of the winter months, and were looking toward the spring. But the war still was not over, the American planes were roaring, we heard the artillery in distance. But overhearing the SS men talking that they were waiting for a new wonder weapon which will turn around the war again in their favor. We did not know what to think. But in the second half of March 1945 the artillery rumbling was louder and closer, we got the word that the French were closing in and we probably will be evacuated, that was our Capos Henrii rumor, then two days later we got the order to pack our things and in a hurry on foot we were marching out, destination unknown. From the past experience that kind of destination did not mean anything good but we had no choice. We left the Neckar Gerach to the distant thunder of the artillery realizing that the end of the war must be near, but will we make it? How did the rest of the electricians from the Neckarelz made out we did not know. With the meager rations of bread only, we were marching for 3 days dragging ourselves like a bunch of goats, stopping only for a short rest or sleep on the side of the road. Then we arrived in the city of Halle, at the railroad station which was very heavily bombed out. For the first time in 3 days we got bread and a hot waterish soup, that lifted our spirits a little bit. We had to wait for the cattle cars to be assembled to transport us. Finally by the evening we were loaded in the cars, it was a relief to be sheltered from the wind and to be able to sit down, with Kuba, Benek, Vitek and other close enough for some warmth. Exhausted we fell asleep. I did not know when the train started to move.

It was day-light when I woke up, the train was moving very slowly, looking through the window we could see that some sections of the city were bombed out, that was the reason for stop and go. I was thinking what would happen should the American planes come and bomb our train? In the last few months we witnessed so many attacks on the trains, but we knew if we were going to die the hated German Empire was going to die with us. We were let out to empty the smelly buckets, got again some soup and bread and back in to the cattle car. The train was going so slowly that we did not know the distance we made. But by the next morning we arrived at our destination. As we disembarked we saw a sign "DACHAU" and farther walking surrounded by SS guard at the gate we saw a sign "ARBEIT MACHT FREI" what ment "work will make us free" We were in "Dachau Concetration Camp" which was the oldest and the first one established in Germany after Hitler came to power. So what was next for us? We got some soup and bread and then went to the entlousing, we had to strip to the bare skin outside the building, and it was April 1, 1945 it was not too warm, I was only hoping that the procedure will not last the whole day, staying with out cloths like in Krakow Plaszow a year before, and whether the entlausing is with water showers and not with the gas. But by now none of us really cared much, just to get over with. I was reasoning that may be there are no gas chambers for us, we were only 6 jews and rest were some other nationalities whom Germans preferred to work to death. The door openned and we went through the head shaving and other stuff, got some solution to smear ourselves what mast have been agains the lice, then got something which supposed to be soap and went to the big room to the cold water showers, but showers! We scrubbed ourselves as well as we could not knowing when we will get shower again. Going out we received new prison striped outfits, which we did not mind, but our leather boots were gone, replaced by the wooden clogs. Then we marched to the barrack # 13 which was the quarantine. We found out that it was the worst one because it was separated from the others by the barbed wire fence and closed gate. Typhoid fever was rampant in the camp. There was a pile of dead bodies on one end of the barrack, we were told that those were the people who died of Typhoid fever last night that a special group will come to remove them to the crematorium.

And tomorrow morning will be the same or larger pile. We were assigned to big room probably for 50 people, but we were 250. The Capo for this room was the worst one I encountered. We were told not to drink the water or come close to the faucet or he will use his whip, then we all had to be outside the barracks the whole day in fresh air. When the time came to get the rations we were told that our rations did not come today, may be tomorrow or day after, so we had to prepare ourselves for the starvation. As we saved some bread from the morning ration I warned my men to eat one crumb at the time at least that what I was going to do. When time came to go to sleep, how do you put 250 men on 50 bunks? We asked Capo to let us sleep on the floor but he said that it was against the regulations, we had to sleep 5 men on one bunk, he did not care how but he did not want anybody on the floor. So we climbed up and positioned ourselves like the sardines, being weak and tired I don't know how but we slept. I was wondering how much a human being can endure? The next day not all of us got up, there were dead to be taken out and thrown on the pile outside the barrack. Since we did not get neither rations nor water I spoke to Kuba about our situation, that we are here on a death row, and if we will not do something we will be one of these days on the pile like the other corpses, but no one of us could come up with any logical solution or idea. So we were walking in the circle between the barracks hungry and thirsty. I asked the Capo for some water from the faucet but he refused, against the regulation I heard again. They probably believed that if we had a Typhoid fever we will contaminate the water, that was my assumption. Then I told him that we were the electricians that we could do something useful, so he told me that where those corpses are going they don't need any electricians, my try was useless. We spent the next night not as crowded because some people were dead. On the third day we finally got our ration and permission to get to the water. How did we survive 3 days and 3 nights without any food or water I do not know but we did. The next few days went by the same way, more corpses outside and more room inside, some guys kept the corpses in order to collect the rations. We were on the bottom of human misery with no way out. But by the end of the week was our lucky break.

The SS men came in looking for some healthy volunteers, I was the first one to raise my hand, then Kuba, Benek, and Vitek came over saying that where ever I am going they will go. I did not know where we were going but it could not have been worse than the place we were in now. The others joined us too, pretty soon it was quite a sizable group, we grabbed our utensils, formed 4 men lines and were led out from the death trap of barrack # 13. On the assembly square we joined more prisoners. As we were waiting I had the chance to observe how large this camp was, everything filled with the slave labor. The " Herren Folks " as the Germans proudly were calling themselves to the last minute were not willing to see that the 1000 years Reich that Hitler promised them is crumbling to ashes. As we were assembled, may be 300 men or more, we got some bread and soup, again we started to see our misery in brighter light. Passing the main gate into the SS buildings area we could see some bombed out housing, so we thought with the satisfaction that the Americans were here also. We were loaded again on the train, again not knowing where to. By the afternoon we were at our destination. It was town of " München Rüm " we presumed that it must be near München as we were walking through the town which was completely bombed out, only the chimneys were standig upright, the rest was in rubble, in my mind I was recalling the destruction of the cities, towns and villages by the Germans in Poland in 1939 when I was in Polish army, now the same destruction came to their homeland. While marching to our sleeping quarters we saw in the woods atlong the road hidden strange looking airplanes, not larger than a fighter plane but with out propellers. For a glider they had too small wings, we could not figure out what they were. When the guard noticed our curiosity they began to brag that those were their new weapons, the jet planes flying 1000 km. per hour, and pretty soon the Americans will be swopped from the sky and finished. We did not believe, but the planes were strange looking. When we came to our quarters we could not believe that we were going to sleep in the horse stables. It was one time exclusive horse racing Park, in one horse stall was going to sleep 25 of us. Each stall was covered with ceramic tiles from the floor to the ceiling including the floor itself. Double large bunk beds were installed in each compartment.

25 men were going to sleep on upper and lower bunks. In the evening we were getting waterish soup and slice of bread, in the morning we got a black water called coffee. In one word we were on a real starvation diet. The next day when we reported for the work assignment we realized where we were and what kind of work was to be done. Before the war Munchen Rum was the largest civilian airport which now was a military airfield. As the jet planes require a very long runways this what they were doing, building the runways for the jet planes. And the Americans were waiting, when the runway was almost finished heavy bombers would come and destroy everything, leaving craters 50 feet deep and 100 feet wide about 50 feet apart. That happened about one week before we came, we were brought to fill the craters and to restore the runways. Small rails were laid in the center of the airfield to run the small wagons to bring the dirt to fill the craters. In my judgement it would take us a long time to fill them in. The group I and my buddies were working was on the end of the runway on the west side, where the huge piles of dirt and sand were, we were loading the wagons. One time I wandered to the east side of the runway where the field terminal building was, there were some jets and pilots were gathering. So pushing the wagons with others we got quite close to observe the men who were flying those jet planes. I was astounded how young the pilots were, not older than 22, and in high ranks of majors and colonels, some decorated with highest decorations of iron crosses, laughing and joking like still believing that the world belonging to them. Somehow the Americans must have missed one runway when bombing so we were waiting for this one to be bombed. When the Germans were taking off in the jet planes with a deafening noise and the speed of a bullet we were wondering how the Americans were managing to control the skies with the propeller driven planes against the speed of German jets. I had no answer but I observed when the American fighters arrived high in the skies then the German jets were coming down for landing, with all the advantage of the speed they did not attack the American planes. It was a puzzle to me. Pushing the wagon between the craters I was wondering what kind of bombs the Americans were using to make such a tremendous holes in the ground. In the camp we were discussing with Kuba and Benek the things that I saw, and wondering what was in store for us. One morning we witnessed 3 medium size American bombers heading toward Munchen,

peppered with anti-aircraft artillery one got shut down, we could see the two parachutes opening, we felt sorry for the guys, who would wind up like us. Next few days were uneventful the weather was nice, it was spring, April 1945, but we were getting weaker it was getting harder to lift the shovel with dirt into the wagon, never the less we kept going not knowing how long we will be able to do it. Few days later was an exceptionally beautiful day not a cloud in the sky I felt some new energy, feeling like it was worth living but we noticed an uneasiness in our guards, they were discussing something between themselves nervously looking at the sky. It was not my worry, I took a breath of fresh air and shovelled the dirt. Shortly before noon the air raid sirens started to blast, it was some of a horror in the air, the guards started to move toward the outskirts of the air field, we were ready to follow them, but they turned the guns toward us ordering us to stay where we were, some of them hollering that our friends will kill us. With the sirens blasting and everybody running we did not realize the meaning of all this. But it done upon me that probably the air field will be bombed by the Americans. Some how my military training came back to me, for a moment I tried to evaluate the situation, some prisoners turned over the wagons and were hiding under, Kuba and Benek were going to do the same, I desperately was looking for the best place to hide if we will be under the bombardment. I decided that the big piles of sand and dirt would provide best cover. In situation like this nobody can tell anybody what to do but for myself I believed that it was the best. So I hollered to follow me if they wanted. Kuba and Benek and Vitek and some other followed me, with the shovels we dug the holes in the dirt but not knowing from which side bombers were coming our effort could be useless. The sirens still were blasting not only in our area but all over, far away. I realized that this was not going to be bombardment by 2 or 3 fighter planes as we have seen in Neckarelz, this was going to be something massive. Except for the sirens on ground was quiet, the guards in their bunkers and ditches on the outskirts and most of us under the wagons or craters or like we in the piles of dirt. As I was laying on my belly lifting my head I had a view of the air field stretching from the terminal building on the east to the west where we were, it was probably more than a mile.

My thinking was interrupted by the vibration in the air, some distant rumbling, we did not know where it was coming from. Then I saw it , I pointed to Kuba north east horizon had a blue line coming at us. We realized those were the heavy bombers and probably hundreds of them, now the guards hollering "your friends will kill you" made a sense. As the line of planes was more visible I had a mixed feeling whether it is time for the last prayer, but I ~~did~~ not know how. I was thinking ~~I was not~~ if I will die from the American bombs should I be angry, I was not, the men in the airplanes were risking their lives for the freedom of others, they were the one who were taking revenge for all the suffering and probably lives of my family, Jenny and countless of others. No, I was not angry, only little bit sad that it had to happen now so close to the end of the war. The loud explosions brought me to the reality. The first planes were over east end of the air field dropping the bombs, I looked with fear but I wanted to see what was happening. The planes were coming in formations of 16, if my count was right, and simultaneously dropping the bombs, which were coming down like wiggling fish, culminating in a tremendous explosions. As soon as one formation dropped their bombs, the next one was in position dropping their load. Somebody mentioned one time that the Americans call it the carpet bombing, and sure that what it was. The whole armada of hundreds of planes spread like a huge eagle were platterring the air field. Each formation getting closer, the explosions deafenning. I looked again, the air field was covered with smoke and dust, and the formations still were coming closer and closer, I knew this was the end. The closer they were dropping the bombs the more power of the explosions was lifting our bodies in the air. It is almost impossible to describe this kind of bombardment being completely exposed to it, only the one who was in the situation like that could understand. I did not lift my head anymore to look, knowing that if we will get hit we will not know and will not feel it. Then I heard a tremendous explosion and dirt was coming down covering us. I tried to lift myself, I did, I knew I was alive so were the others. I tried to see where the other plane formation was going, but there was none, all the planes passed over the air field and now were going toward Munich. By miracle we survived.

The last explosion which almost buried us was from the last formation, it was quite close to us. One more formation and we would have been goners. I would not be writing these memoirs. This was not the end, the sirens began to wail again, and the American fighter planes came down to finish the job. Flying low over the treetops they were machine gunning the planes the Germans were hiding in the woods, starting explosions and fires, then flying along the runways strafing with machine guns. We were running like rabbits, watching them from what side were they coming, so that we could hide from the bullets behind the piles of dirt, because they had the machine guns on their tails too, we had to run to the other side of the pile after they passed us, it was a deadly game. One man who was with us lost the nerve and suddenly started to run toward the outskirts I yelled after him to stop, but he kept running and got cut down by the machine gun fire. It finally became quiet. We all survived between the piles of dirt but the one who ran out was killed. We found out the others on the air field were not so lucky, over 100 men were killed only because the guards would not let them to leave the air field. After the dust settled down we could see the total devastation. Every 50 feet was 500 feet crater, the rails and the wagons we were loading with the dirt have disappeared, and in the woods were burning the jet planes, Hitler's superior weapon which was destined to clear the skies from the American planes. The guards did not brag any more about the superior weapon, neither they felt guilty that over one hundred men were dead because they ordered us to stay on the air field. We meant nothing to them but our revenge and satisfaction were the distant fires which we could see in Munich where the same planes unloaded the rest of their bombs. We got back to our horse stables, got some soup, slice of bread and went on the bunks. I could not sleep, thinking how close we were to become dust as the other 100 men. How lucky we were being assigned to work on the end of the air field, with all those thoughts flashing through my mind I fell asleep. The next day we did not go to the air field any more, the guards marched us to the Rail station and sent us back to Dachau to barrack # 13, where we faced again the corpses outside and dying from Typhoid fever inside. How could we protect ourselves from this deadly disease?

There were changes in barrack #13 while we were away for two weeks, the S.O.B. Capo disappeared, the young SS. guards on the watchtowers were replaced by the old men dressed in SS. uniforms, rumors were that the young men were sent to the front to fight the Americans. The constant rumble of distant artillery and the machine guns fire were telling us that the end of war is near, but will we make it? It was April 25, 1945 my birthday, I was 30 year old and on this day again the SS. men appeared getting all able bodies out for relocation. I was very suspicious of any relocation but we were doomed in barrack #13, so nothing could be worse unless they decide to shoot us some where in the woods outside the camp. When we assembled on the square we were given 1/3 of a loaf of bread, one can what supposed to be meat and some margarine, and we were told that it was for 3 days that we will be on the road, which surprised us to get so much food in one time. It was early afternoon when we were assembled and maybe after 2 hrs. nothing happened, we did not move, so I told Kuba and Benek that it was my birthday, so I was going to celebrate, they said I was crazy, the food was for 3 days. But I started to eat bread and margarine, Kuba and Benek followed me, so we had good time not thinking about tomorrow. As we were sitting and waiting and nothing happened we finished the can of meat that we did not see for years, and for a long time I was not hungry any more. Then order was given to get up and we were marched back to barrack #13. the rumor was that they could not take us out, that we were surrounded by the Americans. If it was true why the Americans were not coming in, one could not trust any rumors flying around. The next days were full uncertainties, machine gun fires were going on all the time, we did not know whether they were German or Americans, we were watching the guard towers to see whether Germans were not mounting the heavy guns to finish us in the last minute, but there was no change, old men were managing the towers.

Then April 29 in the afternoon all the hell broke loose, our gate sprang open, every body hollering "Americans are here". We could not believe, the whole camp was in uproar. I was on the side of the barrack facing the guard tower, guys were ripping apart the barbed wire, some one handed me the rifle pointing to shoot the guard on the tower, did look like he did not know how to cock the gun. I did not know whether it was loaded, I pointed to the sky, pulled the trigger

it was loaded, so I cocked it again pointing to the tower and the old man was standing there with his hands up, that was not the man we should be after. If it was young one the SS man I would not hesitate, but I would not start my freedom with killing the man who was maybe a victim just as we were. I repeatedly shot in the air till all the bullets were out, then I threw the rifle away. The camp was in a joyous uproar. Again who can imagine the feeling of 32.000 people who after so many years of suffering of all kind of cruelty, witnessing the murders, only the one who went through these atrocities. By now the former block leaders were asking us, no more ordering, to assemble on the square, that the American commander wants to address us. We did all 32.000 of us even the sick one came out to the square. The American appeared on the balcony above main entrance to the camp, to the hurra of such a multitude sending the thanks to the sky. Then through the interpreter the ranking American introduced himself as a colonel and expressed his profound happiness that he and his unit were able to liberate us. He said that we were free again and don't have to fear anymore, that we were under the American protection, and seeing the American Flag on his side we had no doubt of our safety. We hugged each other and cried with Kuba, Benek, Vitek and others. At last we are free, we almost could not believe. Happy with my freedom, but the question of our loved ones was far from being answered. At that time I did not know that of every survivor may be 50 people of the family members and relatives were annihilated. I did not know that I was standing here only one lonely survivor of the whole family, that I will have to start a new life without those that were dear in my life. That to survive the Holocaust I will have even to try to forget. But the deep scars will always be reminder of the Holocaust I went through. I and every one of the survivors of the concentration camp will be carrying the pain, the horrors and the scars for the rest of our lives.

"DACHAU" April 29, 1945,
WILL BE WITH ME AS THE MOST
MEMORABLE DAY OF LIBERATION
FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.

